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Post-Imperial Camões

Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

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Introduction

João R. Figueiredo

In his autobiography, Faria e Sousa, arguably the best Camões scholar ever, tells how in his childhood he inherited a book from his grandfather, Estácio de Faria. The book was half-printed, half-manuscript, and the handwritten half of it alternated prose sections with verses. The young Faria was very fond of this book but eventually money spoke louder and he sold it to the son of the abbot who had taught him the humanities. Faria always thought the prose and poems were the work of his ancestor, a poet himself, but when he later read Diogo do Couto's famous passage in *Década viii* where the historian recalls his meeting with Camões and the poet's announcement that he was in the course of writing a book in prose and verse called *Parnaso*, his mind was illuminated and shame fell on him:

Luego que lei esto en Diego de Couto, acordándome de que mi abuelo había tratado con particular amistad a Luis de Camoens en Lisboa y de que el estilo de aquel libro se me parecía tanto al de Luis de Camoens, tuve para mí que era de él el libro y que por su muerte había dado un vuelo de casi siete leguas, que ésta es la distancia que hay desde aquella ciudad a la región de Entre Duero y Miño, adonde él vino a parar. Todas las veces que se me acuerda esto, y que aquel libro que así eché a perder, es posible que fuese el *Parnaso* de *Luis de Camoens* escrito de su mano, me lleno de ira contra mí, y pienso perder el juicio. (134)

This episode illustrates clearly the attitude of its author towards Camões, whom he never failed to call *mi poeta*, an expression to be read literally, since Faria, in spite of his many flaws, has had no rival as a critic. Faria e Sousa's

ardent admiration for his poet goes so far as to posit unashamedly a direct though unlikely genealogy that links Camões and his critic within this private, familiar mythology.

I quote this excerpt and mention Faria's critical rhetoric to contrast his attitude with what is not so much a major trend in Camões scholarship as, above all, the mainstream talk about Camões in general. While the ingenious author of the *Lusíadas Comentadas* insists on considering the author of *Os Lusíadas* his own property, others have bestowed upon Camões and his poetry the fate of being Portugal's property. The difference, of course, lies in the individuality of Faria e Sousa's appropriation as opposed to the idealistic claim that a poem is the expression of a national soul: *my poet* as opposed to *a nation's poet*.

Fortunately, it has been more difficult to steal Camões from this critic than to steal him from the Portuguese. The former is not necessarily a goal in itself (though, again fortunately, it is not up to me to read the minds of all Camões scholars). The latter is most desirable. Hence the importance of a colloquium on post-imperial Camões, in English and in America. It is fitting to recall that, ironically, Faria e Sousa's commentaries were written in Spanish and published in Spain, when Portugal was under Spanish rule. It is not a question of now showing Portugal (or its surrogate, the Portuguese language at its most sublime) to the world, as politicians would say, no matter the ideology they profess, but of allowing Camões to be stolen from the Portuguese. In the title, "post-imperial" is to be read broadly, in the sense that the persons who contributed papers to the colloquium engage in a reflection about the role of Camões's poetry after the demise of the empire, that they do not care about the burden of the empire in Camões scholarship, or simply that the poet belongs to whoever wants to make him his or her own property. This issue of *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* gathers a selection of those papers, read and discussed at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth on October 11-12, 2002.

My first acknowledgment goes to the institution that hosted the conference, to the Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture and to the other co-organizer, Victor J. Mendes. Their hospitality is beyond praise. Neither the conference nor this volume would have been possible without the invaluable, tireless assistance of Gina M. Reis and the keen aesthetic sense of Spencer Ladd and Memory Holloway. I am most grateful to them all.

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Articles/Artigos

Camões the Sonneteer

Helen Vendler

Abstract. Although Camões is principally known as an epic writer he also produced a significant number of remarkable sonnets in the Petrarchan mode, some of them Petrarchan in inspiration but others that deal with historical and elegiac themes. Camões's strength as a sonneteer lies not only in his limpid vocabulary and exquisite sense of cadence, but also in his exploration of the most obscure reaches of human consciousness, especially in the delineation of states of battlement and anxiety. His technical comment is supreme, and his range of stylistic experimentation—whether allegorical, pastoral, or erotic—continually exciting.

I read Spanish but not Portuguese, and so I bring to Camões only a shadow of what a native reader could offer. But I come to Camões's sonnets as someone with a long interest in the English sonnet, and with some knowledge of the European practice of Petrarch, Sannazaro, DuBellay, and Ronsard. In sketching out the breadth of Camões's sonnet practice, I want to look more closely at some of the sonnets that seem to me most striking.

First, of course, another disclaimer. The ascription of these poems to Luis de Camões (1524?-80) is by no means certain in all cases, and his editors themselves disagree on which of the sonnets in the various *cancioneiros* are his. The attributions depend on marginal notations, on the opinion of the earliest editors, on the position of a given sonnet within what is deemed a "run" of authentic sonnets in a manuscript, on resemblances to passages in the *Lusiads*, and so on. A certain dryness comes into the voice of any editor

or critic as soon as the question of ascription arises. So, in speaking of “Camões,” we are on firm terrain when we treat his epic, but on quicksand, to some extent, when we turn to the sonnets. In what follows, I have tried to stay on relatively sure ground, drawing my examples from the 1973 Coimbra edition of the *Rimas*.¹ I am most grateful to Professor João Ricardo Figueiredo, who read my first draft and advised me about the sonnet canon; to Professor Victor Mendes, who read the sonnets aloud when I presented this essay at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth conference, and to Professor Frank Sousa, who invited me to write on Camões.

For convenience, scholars have classified Camões’s sonnets by genre, dividing them into love-sonnets, sonnets of exile, heroic sonnets, and so on. The love-sonnets are allied to the Petrarchan and pastoral conventions, the sonnets of exile are linked to Camões’s life away from Portugal (especially in Goa), and the heroic sonnets, some of them elegiac, praise masculine or feminine martial or stoic virtue. In each of these groups, one can perceive a distinct inventiveness in Camões’s practice.

Camões learned from Petrarch a plangent simplicity of diction, as we can see in his quasi-translation of one of the most famous of Petrarch’s sonnets, *Pace non trovo*. Although the Petrarch sonnet is highly stylized in its geometrical oppositions, its lexicon is transparently artless:

Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra;
 E temo, e spero; et ardo, e son un ghiaccio;
 E volo sopra ‘l cielo, e giaccio in terra;
 E nulla stringo, e tutto ‘l mondo abbraccio.

So it continues, until the last open and unguarded statement:

Egualmente mi spiace morte e vita:
 In questo stato son, donna, per voi.
 [*Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra*]

Camões imitates Petrarch’s candor of expression along with his paradoxes:

agora espero, agora desconfio,
 agora desvario, agora acerto.

And he ends with the same openness:

Se me pergunta alguém porque assi ando,
 respondo que não sei; porém suspeito
 que só porque vos vi, minha Senhora.
 [*Tanto de meu estado me acho incerto*; 4 (118); IX]

This defenseless language becomes most striking when it is placed in the otherwise “artificial” setting of Greek pastoral nymphs and shepherds. Although the setting may be “precious,” the utterances of Camões’s shepherds are often astonishingly “human” and without courtly patterning. The setting, for instance, in which the dying shepherdess Nise finds herself is rich in the crystalline rays of marquetried dawn, and she is stationed, in the sonnet’s octave, among the grand powers of Fate, Time, and Heaven:

O raio cristalino s’estendia
 pelo mundo, da Aurora marchetada,
 quando Nise, pastora delicada,
 donde a vida deixava, se partia.

Dos olhos, com que o Sol escurecia
 levando a vista em lágrimas banhada,
 de si, do Fado e Tempo magoada,
 pondo os olhos no Céu, assi dizia:

But when the shepherdess herself speaks, it is to distinguish herself from both ornamental nature and the celestial powers above. The sun and rosy Dawn may bring delight to other discontented souls, but she dies alone, and on a subjected human plane. Her language in the final tercet subsides into pure simplicity:

—Nasce, sereno Sol, puro e luzente;
 resplandece, fermosa e roxa Aurora,
 qualquer alma alegrando descontente;

que a minha, sabe tu que, desd’agora,
 jamais na vida a podes ver contente,

nem tão triste nenhuma outra pastora.

[*O raio cristalino s'estendia*; 67 (150); XCIX]

In another such case, the shepherd Liso cries out to his nymph Natércia (an anagram of “Caterina”) in those desperately simple and wounded phrases that lovers feel shame in even uttering:

—Porque te vás de quem por ti se perde,

para quem pouco te ama?

[*Na metade do Céu subido ardia*; 77 (155); LXX]

And Echo answers him in its own heartbreaking syllables: “—*Pouco te ama.*”

Camões’s pastoral speeches are not always so devoid of rhetorical self-protection, but it seems true that the more highly stylized writing tends to come earlier in a given sonnet, yielding, at the end, to the blank dismay of “artless” diction. Camões repeatedly performs lonely sincerity over against the splendor of nature or the breadth of Fate. The note of plaintive plainness, learned from Petrarch, confers the “sincerity” that we associate with Camões as lover, a “sincerity” that can arise even in the most traditional adoption of Petrarchan conventions.

This “sincerity-effect” in Camões is of course practiced by other post-Petrarchan sonneteers. We hear it in Ronsard’s “Je serai sous la terre,” in Sidney’s “Look in thy heart and write,” in Shakespeare’s “O thou, my lovely boy.” What strikes me in Camões is the variety of situations in which he employs it—not merely in the love-sonnet, but also in the sonnet of exile, the heroic sonnet, and the mythological sonnet. As I examine some of these, I’ll mention, among their other qualities, the return of the “sincere” note, and the role it plays *vis-à-vis* Camões other effects in the sonnets.

But first I want to describe Camões’s counterbalance to the “sincerity-effect”: the intellectual effect manifested in ostentatious patterning. Such patterning in any poem announces that the structure of the poem has been entirely thought through before it has been written down. Naturally, the sonnet-form itself suggests such forethought, but often sonnets aim to make us “forget” that the poem must end after fourteen lines and must express itself in a coercive rhyme-scheme. If the diction and syntax are wayward enough, we can feel a “spontaneity” in a sonnet before we acknowledge the Procrustean bed of form. But many sonnets want us to see explicitly their pre-planned state, and the most common way of displaying that planning is

in the visible repetition of a single word. When a word has been so deeply incised in the fabric of the poem, its sudden absence becomes more remarkable than its presence (a fact that Shakespeare knew and exploited more than any other sonneteer). Here is Camões's patterning of a mood of ultimate disillusion, in which the word that keeps coming up in "letters of gold"—to which the poet gives ultimate emphasis—is the verb *cantar* (in infinitive and tensed form) and its noun-form, *canto*. Two other words—*confiar/confianças* and *passado*—recur as well. All three of these important words vanish—as though they never were—in the collapse of hope at the close:

Eu CANTEI já, e agora vou chorando
o tempo que CANTEI tão *confiado*;
parece que no CANTO já passado
se estavam minhas lágrimas criando.

CANTEI; mas se me alguém pergunta: —Quando?
—Não sei; que também fui nisso enganado.
É tão triste este meu presente estado
que o passado, por ledó, estou julgando.

Fizeram-me CANTAR, manhosamente,
contentamentos não, mas *confianças*;
CANTAVA, mas já era ao som dos ferros.

De quem me queixarei, que tudo mente?
Mas eu que culpa ponho às esperanças
onde a Fortuna injusta é mais que os erros?
[*Eu cantei já, e agora vou chorando*; 109 (171); CLXVII]

There is no version of our golden *cantar* in the last tercet; the poet has ceased to sing, and *cantar* has mutated to *queixar*. There is no mention of *confianças*, or even its feeble form *esperanças*, now that Fortune has proved untrustworthy. As the past tenses of narration move into a present agony, the poet dismisses the deceiving *passado* with all its lying appearances. It is almost necessary that such an intellectually-patterned sonnet display itself to us as one that treats the past; it is only by reflecting on his former illusions, and arranging them in temporal sequence, that the poet can mournfully dismiss

them. The most extraordinary line here, of course, is the one in which we last hear the sound of lyrical voice, as the poet persists in singing to the accompaniment of the clank of his fetters. This disharmony of antithetical musical effect ends by annihilating itself, as the joyous *já* of “Eu cantei já” mutates into the painful *já* of “Cantava, mas já era ao som dos ferros.” The music dies away; we hear the last tercet as said, not sung.

Yet in spite of the highly visible patterning, the “simplicity” of which I have spoken earlier persists in the immobile root *cant-* on which the poet rings changes: *cantei*, *cantei*, *canto*, *cantei*, *cantar*, *cantava*. As we hear the changes rung, we feel acutely the absence of the present participle *cantando*, the present-tense verb *canto*, and the future *cantarei*. These crucial parts of the verb have been amputated, lopped off beyond rescue. The pang of hopelessness, so keenly felt through the impossibility of conjugating *cantar* in these absent present and future forms, confers “spontaneity” on the last songless tercet, not only in spite of, but because of, the patterning that has preceded it.

The most distinctively Camõesian sonnets are produced, it seems to me, when the sincerity-effect appears in conjunction with the intellectual effect. Among these one can certainly cite the famous *Alma minha gentil* [80 (156); XIX], with its naked grief embedded in a quasi-mathematical and highly stylized proportioning of time; but for local piety’s sake I will use as my example of the interpenetration of “spontaneous” feeling and patterned thought the sonnet *Quem vê, Senhora, claro e manifesto* [17 (125); XVI]. Elizabeth Bishop borrowed the adoring closing lines of this poem for the dedication of her volume *Questions of Travel* (1965) to her Brazilian lover, Lota de Macedo Soares: these were the first lines of Camões I ever read.

The lover of *Quem vê, Senhora* speaks at first in the present tense of axiom, saying that whoever gazes upon his beloved’s eyes should be willing to lose his eyesight as a payment—“an honest price”—for such a glimpse. The poem is one of many in which Camões imagines a love-economy of hyperbolic payment, as though only by such equations and measurings could the inestimable value of love be assessed. The speaker then passes to his own case, and, using the imperfect and preterite tenses of narrative, avers that he himself has paid far more than eyesight: he has given up life and soul and hope itself in order to be worthy of having seen and loved those eyes. Nothing of all he once possessed is left to him.

The sonnet, as it reaches its sestet, instead of continuing to dwell on the synecdoche of the lady’s eyes, focuses on the lady herself, as the word *vos*

replaces the significant multiple *los* of reference to the eyes (*vê-los*, *mereçê-los*, *querê-los*)—insisted on, one feels, to signify by recurrent rhyme an indisputable identification of *los* (the eyes) with *belos*, the word itself containing the precious *los*. The sonnet pursues further hyperboles: not only has the lover paid all that he has, but he is willing (in view of the profit he derives from his surrender) to give as much as he has and as much as he is able because—as he says in closing—“However much I pay you, the more I owe you.” In the transcription below, I have graphically distinguished these themes and the verbs attached to them: I use underlining for the “minor” payment (the loss of sight); *italics* for the qualitative “major” payment (life, soul, hope, and all); **bold** for the words quantifying the major payment—“what I have, what I can, what more,” including the four instances of “more”; ***bold italics*** for the economic vocabulary of paying, owing, pricing, and profiting; and CAPITAL LETTERS for the strikingly different wholehearted “gift-economy” of free offering in *dar*.

Quem vê, Senhora, claro e manifesto
o lindo ser de vossos olhos belos,
se não perder a vista só em vê-los,
já não **paga** o que **deve** a vosso gesto.

Este me parecia **preço** honesto;
mas eu, por de ventagem mereçê-los,
DEI **mais** a *vida* e *alma* por querê-los,
donde já me não fica **mais** de resto.

Assi que a *vida* e *alma* e *esperanca*
e **tudo quanto tenho**, *tudo* é vosso,
e o **proveito** disse eu só o levo.

Porque é tamanha bem-aventurança
o DAR-vos **quanto tenho e quanto posso**
que, **quanto mais** vos **pago**, **mais** vos **devo**.
[*Quem vê, Senhora, claro e manifesto*; 17 (125); XVI]

The cognitive dissonance between *dar* and *pagar* registers the bafflement of the lover at the strange economy of love, so elusive to description. But of

course the sonnet is indirectly a plea that the exchange be mutual—that the beloved be willing to give (if only by the continued bestowal of her lovely eye-glances) as well as to be paid. The degree of intellectuality in the sonnet, as the speaker inventories the contents of his erotic ledger and looks to balance its accounts, shows how important it is to the lover to have thought out in advance his bookkeeping, evident in the sedulously-worked patterns highlighted in the different fonts above. But, as I have said, it is when plangency balances intellectuality, when surrender replaces calculation, that the Camões sonnet reaches its height. Here, it is the return of the verb *dar* in the sestet that, contradicting *devo*, lets us register love as something more than counted trading. In an ordinary material exchange, the last line would read, “Quanto mais vos pago, mais me deveis.” But in “quanto mais vos pago, mais vos devo,” the sudden coupling of paying and owing, both inscribed on the lover’s side of the account, expunges all calculation except that of “bem-aventurança,” and we feel the “spontaneous” generosity of love take over and obliterate the founding exchange-metaphor of the poem.

“Spontaneity” is suggested by a thematic surge of feeling. We can remark such surges in some of Camões’s mythological sonnets, in which he often reimagines the inherited story, as he does in his sonnet on Hero and Leander. In Ovid’s *Heroides*, the lovers, still living, address epistles to each other, but in Camões’s poem Leander is shown at the very moment of drowning, when Hero is lost to him forever. While swimming across the Hellespont towards Hero’s signal-light, Leander has been overcome by wind and waves, and has lost both strength and speech:

Seguia aquele fogo, que o guiava,
 Leandro, contra o mar e contra o vento;
 as forças lhe faltavam já e o alento,
 Amor lhas refazia e renovava.

Depois que viu que a alma lhe faltava,
 não esmorece; mas, no pensamento,
 (que a língua já não pode) seu intento
 ao mar que lho cumprisse, encomendava.

Moved by Love, but deprived of language (as the brief parenthesis tells us, its pang an aside), Leander sends a telepathic message to the conqueror sea:

his sole prayer is that the sea should spare Hero in her tower the sight of his dead body. He feels able to ask this because in the past the sea envied his happiness with Hero. Camões, in short, invents an “unrecorded” moment in the Leander story, the moment of the exhausted body and failing tongue, and identifies with the isolated Leander sufficiently to invent a dying wish, in thought-words, for him:

—Ó mar (dezia o moço só consigo),
já te não peço a vida; só queria
que a de Hero me salves; não me veja. . .

Este meu corpo morto, lá o desvia
daquela torre. Sê-me nisto amigo,
pois no meu maior bem me houveste enveja!
[*Seguia aquele fogo, que o guiava*; 61 (147); CLXXXV]

Sometimes, as in this case, Camões achieves plangency by adding an episode to the given myth, but at other times he subtracts aspects of the myth to render it more tragic. In the *Metamorphoses* (VII, 690-862), Cephalus, husband of Procris, is abducted by Aurora who, annoyed by his pining for his wife, sends him back to her with the advice that he test Procris's love, of which he is so proud. Assuming a disguise, Cephalus tempts Procris, and at length she succumbs. But Procris then turns the same trick on Cephalus: he too falls, and they are in consequence reconciled, in a typically Ovidian irony. Camões truncates the myth, even though he devotes two sonnets to it. He convinces us first of Cephalus's overwhelming love of Procris by his abandoning of the ravishing Aurora, and then he turns the sonnet tragic as Cephalus discovers, by his own underhand machinations, that his belief in Procris's fidelity was baseless:

Por sua Ninfa, Céfaló deixava
Aurora, que por ele se perdia;
posto que dá princípio ao claro dia,
posto que as roxas flores imitava.

Ele, que a bela Prócris tanto amava
que só por ela tudo enjeitaria,

deseja de atentar se lhe acharia
tão firme fé como nele achava.

Mudado o traje, tece o duro engano;
outro se finge, preço põe diante,
quebra-se a fé mudável, e consente.

The narrator, his story complete, bursts out with a warning to other lovers:

Ó engenho sutil para seu dano!
Vede que manhas busca um cego amante
para que sempre seja descontente!
[*Por sua Ninfa, Céfalos deixava*, 62 (147); CLXXXIII]

Even in the second of the two sonnets recounting the myth, Cephalus does not find pardon, though he implores it from the stony-hearted Procris. The Ovidian comic bargain is not made, and by this deletion, Camões retains a sonnet-atmosphere of loss and irony.

Yet greater than Camões's reinventions of myth are his daring invasions of the most inchoate moments of consciousness. He is not afraid to approach the forbidding precincts where we are most unintelligible to ourselves, those "dark passages" (as Keats called them) where "all is in a mist." Though many examples of his skill at such moments could be offered, I will restrict myself to one, the arresting sonnet *Busque Amor novas artes*. In this poem, the lover has lost all hope and yet he hopes; in mid-sea with his ship lost ("andando em bravo mar, perdido o lenho"), he boasts that now that he has seen the worst, nothing can dismay him. And yet—

Mas, conquanto não pode haver desgosto
onde esperança falta, lá me esconde
Amor um mal, que mata e não se vê.

Que dias há que n'alma me tem posto
um não sei quê, que nasce não sei onde,
vem não sei como, e doi não sei porquê.
[*Busque Amor novas artes, novo engenho*, 3 (118); XV]

The “mal que mata e não se vê” would, even by itself, have an effect on us comparable to that of Blake’s “invisible worm” that consumes the sick rose. But that present-tense *não se vê* engenders a trail of other such *nãos*, each attached to a past in which the lover found in his heart a something he is unable to define—“I know not what, I know not whence, I know not how, I know not why.” The one missing term among all these *nãos* is “Um não sei quê que leva não sei aonde”: “A what-I-know-not that leads I know not whither.” As always with notable poets, what is missing is crucial. That “whither” will be, we know, the grave, the bottom of the sea where the “mal que mata” will take the shipwrecked lover.

Closely related to that frustrated apprehension of the indefinable but real interior of the psyche are the moments in which Camões allies himself to virtual rather than literal meaning, as he does in the Spanish sonnet *Pues lágrimas tratáis*. Starved for a reassurance that his beloved indeed feels pity, the lover is prepared to convert whatever she has sent into a tear intended for him. In the elaborate Renaissance literature of tears, this is a firmly-managed example (avoiding the grotesque into which Crashaw falls in his poem on Mary Magdalen, “The Weeper”). Camões, addressing his own eyes (which have been shedding tears a thousandfold), says he is well repaid by this single tear from his mistress, if indeed it be a tear at all:

Mas una cosa mucho deseada,
aunque se vea cierta, no es creída,
cuanto más esta, que me es enviada.

Pero digo que aunque sea fingida,
que basta que por lágrima sea dada,
porque sea por lágrima tenida.

[*Pues lágrimas tratáis, mis ojos tristes*, 147 (190); CCXCIX]

It is the “digo que” here that astonishes: the pure force of the word undertakes to make uncertain things certain, feigned things real, real things virtual. And yet the desolation of the lover, in true Camõesian fashion, is felt behind his declaration: we are brought into contact with his sorrow in the sceptical axiom telling us that the much yearned-for thing, when it comes, cannot be credited. That scepticism is set off against the assertive, even aggressive, formal twinning of the last two lines: *que... por :: porque; lágrima :: lágrima; sea :: sea; dada :: tenida*. Like

Emily Dickinson's soul selecting her own society, Camões's lover here closes the valves of his attention like stone. Against all reason, *no creída* and *fingida* are firmly superseded, in their shared phonetic space, by the willed *tenida*.

I should pause for a moment just to remark on Camões's hunt among stylistic paths (familiar and unfamiliar) for inventions to vary the sonnet. Besides his already mentioned echo-sonnet [77 (155); LXX] with its anagram substituting "Natércia" for "Caterina," there is an acrostic sonnet divided down the middle by a vertical gutter, on either side of which Camões composes the 28-letter phrase "Voso como cativo, mui alta senhora": "Yours as captive, noblest lady" [*Vencido está de Amor meu pensamento*; 145 (189); CLIX].² We find as well two sonnets of epitome,³ *Pelos extremos raros que mostrou* [76 (154); XLIV], and *Diversos dões reparte o Céu benino* [56 (144); CXLII]; and an allegorical sonnet, *El vaso reluciente y cristalino* [146 (189); CCLXXXIII], in which a vial symbolizes the beloved's body, while the perfume it contains represents her soul. There are several dialogue-sonnets as well: among these are —*Como fizeste Pórcia, tal ferida?* [71(152); LXI]; the "Siste, viator" sonnet —*Não passes, caminhante!* [156 (194); XXXVII]; the elegiac sonnet —*Que levas, cruel Morte?* [158 (195); LXXXIII]; and the heroic sonnet in praise of Dom João III, —*Quem jaz no grão sepulcro* [160 (196); LIX]. Each of the dialogue-sonnets is motivated by a constant inwardly-renewed set of questions and answers. I do not count most of these exercises among Camões's best work, but they demonstrate that he interested himself in the play of alphabetical letters and the roster of speech-acts as well as in the more evident aspects of sonnet-style such as diction or imagery.

I want to stop for a moment on the formal proportions of the elegiac sonnet on a premature death, —*Que levas, cruel Morte?* Because the abrupt stichomythia of Camões's catechetical syntax mimics the shock and sudden questioning engendered by premature death, the stylistic rigidity seems more than an empty exercise:

—Que levas, cruel Morte? —Um claro dia.
 —A que horas o tomaste? —Amanhecendo.
 —Entendes o que levas? —Não o entendo.
 —Pois quem to faz levar? —Quem o entendia.

—Seu corpo, quem o goza? —A terra fria.
 —Como ficou sua luz? —Anoitecendo.

—Lusitânia que diz? —Fica dizendo:
Enfim, não mereci Dona Maria.

The eighth line, breaking the preceding question-answer half-line patterning, declares its sorrow to be too great to be contained in a half-line: “Lusitânia” needs a full line to declare its unworthiness. The sestet repeats this pattern of the full-line answer in its closing two lines:

—Que fica lá que ver? —Nenhua cousa;
mas fica que chorar sua beldade.
[*Que levas, cruel Morte?*; 158 (195); LXXXIII]

In a similar matching of style to matter, the question-and-answer sonnet addressed to Brutus’s Portia mimics the sustained incredulity that a spectator feels before a case of suicide. Portia, having first wounded herself with a sword to see if she indeed had the courage to do violence to herself, ends her life by swallowing live coals. “Why—having accustomed yourself to steel—would you consume fire?” asks the interlocutor, aghast, to whom Portia replies that “we feel not an accustomed blow,” and that she wants to show her love by feeling fresh pain when she dies:

—Pois porque comes, logo, fogo ardente,
se a ferro te costumás? —Porque ordena
Amor que morra e pene juntamente.

—E tens a dor do ferro por pequena?
—Si: que a dor costumada não se sente;
e eu não quero a morte sem a pena.
[—*Como fizeste, Pórcia, tal ferida?*; 71 (152); LXI]

Camões demonstrates Portia’s resolve by altering her first sestet-reply in her second one. Whereas earlier she had related the command of Love in the third person (“ordena / Amor que morra e pene juntamente”) she bravely voices it in a decisive first-person form at the close: “eu não quero a morte sem a pena.” Camões is careful to find a phrasing that will match style to morality.

The sonnet on Portia belongs to another sub-category of Camões’s work: the heroic sonnet, a genre we are not surprised to find in the repertoire of the

author of the *Lusiads*. (He seems to have admired stoic heroism in women, devoting a sonnet to Lucrece as well as to Portia.) We have nothing quite like his heroic sonnets in English until Milton. The most interesting to me of these sonnets is the one addressed to the Viceroy Dom Luis de Ataíde on his return to Portugal, *Que vençais no Oriente tantos Reis* [164 (198); LXIV]. Its two long-breathed sentences, one for the octave, one for the sestet, draw the same comparison: that feats in material arms abroad are less great than the feats in moral virtue at home. The Viceroy's military triumphs over kings have occurred far and wide, in the Orient, in India; but at home, unarmed, he has conquered monsters and Chimeras:

Que vençais no Oriente tantos Reis,
que de novo nos deis da Índia o Estado,
que escureceis a fama que ganhado
tinham os que a ganharam a infêis;

que do tempo tendes vencido as leis,
que tudo, enfim, vençais co tempo armado,
mais é vencer na pátria, desarmado,
os monstros e as Quimeras que venceis.

It is not clear, at the close of the octave, what these monsters and Chimeras can be. What is certain is that they are governed by the same verb—*vencer*—as the kings, the laws of time, and everything else that the Viceroy has overcome. Their forces, if they are to be routed, require a power greater than that exerted by arms. The sestet then reveals the human names of the mythological monsters and Chimeras—massed ingratiitudes, massive envy—as the sonnet sardonically rhymes “imigo” with “amigo,” intimating that the native realm and an enemy kingdom are scarcely to be distinguished:

E assi, sobre vencerdes tanto imigo,
e por armas fazer que, sem segundo,
vosso nome no mundo ouvido seja,

o que vos dá mais nome inda no mundo,
é vencerdes, Senhor, no Reino amigo,
tantas ingratições, tão grande enveja!

If the weapons against kings and laws are the visible ones familiar to heroic exploit, the weapons by which the Viceroy will conquer the enemies at home are the moral virtues of self-possession and integrity. Like Milton after him, Camões urges the concept of a better fortitude, one exceeding the fortitude of the warrior: and he demonstrates stylistically the replacement of the one by the other by the chain of constructions in “vencer,” which demonstrate a hierarchy by which moral conquests outstrip material ones.

It is impossible to speak about the range of Camões without glancing at one of the heartfelt sonnets about the landscape of Portugal. There is not a single sonnet by Shakespeare, nostalgic or otherwise, on England, but we can recall, as we think of Camões on his “doces águas,” Du Bellay’s comparable tenderness towards his “petit Lyre” in *Heureux qui, comme Ulysse*. The public dimension of Camões as a sonneteer is evident not only in the heroic and elegiac sonnets, but also in those of Portuguese *pietas*. Leaving aside the beautiful *Doces águas e claras do Mondego* [6 (119); CXXIII], I choose as example *A formosura desta fresca serra* [136 (184); CCLXXI]. As we read its first quatrain, it appears to us a celebratory sonnet. By this I mean that nothing in the opening quatrain suggests that the poem will be a dismissal of the beauties of nature; on the contrary. In the first quatrain, Camões conceals his own desolate predicament in order that we may experience the full untroubled sweetness of the natural landscape, from which all sadness, he says, has been banished:

A formosura desta fresca serra,
e a sombra dos verdes castanheiros,
o manso caminhar destes ribeiros,
donde toda a tristeza se desterra;

The second quatrain, too, appears to be one of pure natural description, enlarging the scene, as it broadens out from brooks to the ocean and further land, from the chestnut grove to the horizon where the sun is setting and straying flocks are being gathered, ending in the sky where clouds are at their soft collisions:

o rouco som do mar, a estranha terra,
o esconder do sol pelos outeiros,
o recolher dos gados derradeiros,
das nuvens pelo ar a branda guerra;

Even the beginning of the sestet seems to offer us merely a summary of the previous natural delights:

enfim, tudo o que a rara natureza
com tanta variedade nos oferece—

But then the scene crashes into nothingness. Instead of saying, as Wordsworth might, that nature's variety brings us an exaltation offered by no other sight, Camões, in the person (hitherto undefined) who speaks the poem, reveals now that it is a lover who speaks, and that without the presence of the beloved, the more beautiful the setting, the greater the lover's sadness:

tudo...
me está (se não te vejo) magoando.

Sem ti, tudo m'enoja e m'avorrece;
sem ti, perpétuamente estou passando
nas mores alegrias, mor tristeza.

The “tristeza” that seemed so successfully banished in line 4 reappears in force in line 14. Everything wearies the lover's spirit, is abhorrent to him; and these destructive verbs, “enojar” and “avorrecer” destroy the pastoral calm of the preceding lines. And yet, as we look back over those earlier lines, we see that they have stealthily prepared us for the bitter close, in their own gradual darkening, from the shade of the chestnuts to the setting sun to the cloudy heavens with their unquiet commotion. The music, too, has darkened from the soft cadences of the brooks to the hoarse cry of the sea. By such subtle gradations Camões leads us to the revealed distress of the speaker. We remember from such a sonnet both the “alegrias” of the beautiful opening and the “tristeza” of the somber close; in his landscape poems Camões is true to both objective and subjective reality.

The genre of complaint, seen in this and many other sonnets, was one that Camões was to practice with great distinction, not least in his poems of Babylonian exile, of which two, both based, like “Sobre os rios,” on the psalmic laments of the exiled Jews, are sonnets: *Cá nesta Babilonia* [120 (176); CXCIV] and *Na ribeira do Eufrates* [129 (181); CCLXXXII]. The first of these is a bitter political outburst condemning a country “onde o mal se

afina, e o bem se dana”: the second can serve us as an instance of Camões’s genius for the unhappy ending.

Camões manages very often to end in a horrifying place, psychologically speaking, without either slighting or exaggerating the despair he depicts. Neither irony nor melodrama appeals to Camões at such moments: austerity of mind and discretion of discourse, together with an unsparing diction, are his habitual resources. Psalm 137, on which Camões draws for his sonnets of Babylonian exile, is voiced in a collective first-person plural:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered
Zion.

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that
wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?

But in *Na ribeira do Eufrates*, Camões transmutes the biblical collective voice into the first person singular, giving us an individual exiled Jew in Babylon, recalling his past happiness and glory in Zion:

Na ribeira do Eufrates assentado,
discorrendo me achei pela memória
aquele breve bem, aquela glória,
que em ti, doce Sião, tinha passado.

He is urged to sing by those who shallowly tell him that in singing one forgets one’s troubles, no matter how serious one’s hardship. As they urge him to give up his weeping, they ascribe to themselves a knowledge of remedy superior to his own. They make themselves appear to be comforters, echoing his “memória” and “glória” by their mention of his “história” and the “vitória” over sorrow by song; to his “passado” they add their callow reiteration of his “passado bem”:

Da causa de meus males perguntado
me foi: —Como não cantas a história
de teu passado bem, e da vitória
que sempre de teu mal hás alcançado?
Não sabes, que a quem canta se lhe esquece

o mal, inda que grave e rigoroso?
Canta, pois, e não chores dessa sorte.

To these interlocutors, who have never known a grief like his, the speaker sighs a reproof: the kindly surcease for great sorrow is not song but death:

Respondo com suspiros: —Quando crece
a muita saúde, o piadoso
remédio é não cantar senão a morte.

Not their mistaken “esquece,” says the speaker, but his “crece” (phonetically matching but semantically opposite) is the word for his present condition. And if their “rigoroso” is to be succeeded by his “piadoso,” that will happen not by singing but by dying. This sonnet is one of those paradoxical poems that, like Frost’s oven-bird, know in singing not to sing. There are many such impeccable unhappy endings in the 166 sonnets of Camões. They rarely disappoint, and one could cite scores of them, many as bare-boned as the one last quoted. I would recall, in the context of spare unhappy endings, the repeated “Não sei,” mentioned earlier, of *Busque Amor* [3 (118); XV].

I am tempted, in closing, to discuss the majestic sonnet in which Camões, like Job, curses the day he was born, *O dia em que eu nasci, moura e pereça* [131 (182); CCCXXXIX]; but darker to him than any grievous life-event is the confusion of the soul that closes *Correm turvas as águas deste rio* [104 (168); CXCV], a poem revealing, in its opening lines, that the waters of the Tagus have been polluted and the flowering fields have withered. To this natural disorder there succeeds metaphysical chaos, and the poet concludes that truth is nowhere to be found in this God-forgotten world:

Correm turvas as águas deste rio,
que as do Céu e as do monte as enturbaram;
os campos florecidos se secaram,
intratável se fez o vale, e frio.

Passou o verão, passou o ardente estio,
uas cousas por outras se trocaram;
os fermentidos Fados já deixaram
do mundo o regimento, ou desvario.

Tem o tempo sua ordem já sabida;
o mundo, não; mas anda tão confuso,
que parece que dele Deus se esquece.

Casos, opiniões, natura e uso
fazem que nos pareça desta vida
que não há nela mais que o que parece.

The opaque *o que parece* is the direct result of the God who *se esquece*. The rhymes are like a vise: if God would remember his creation, being would flare forth, dismissing seeming. *Uso* has been replaced by *confuso* in a false “etymology” by which *utor*, *uti* has slipped into *fundo*, *fundere*. Whirling around us in a maelstrom are all the useless appurtenances and adjuncts of thought: cases, opinions, nature, and habit welter in disorder. They create the paradox of the empty ending:

...nos pareça desta vida
que não há nela mais que o que parece.

One wants to think that life has an interior; but it turns out that exterior seeming is all there is. This chaotic psychic vacancy, this life that has nothing on the inside but what appears on the outside, is Camões’s hell. It takes a great poet to make the tiny word “nela” denote such an abyss. And it takes a great poet to subside from the mental hailstorm of “casos, opiniões, natura e uso” to the psychological black ice of “nos pareça . . . o que parece,” the bleakest of all tautologies.

There should be a new translation into English—even if into English prose—of Camões’s sonnets, to replace the fustian of the Burton version, which altogether fails to convey Camões’s lofty plainness and painful sobriety. The great thematic range of Camões’s sonnets could reveal, for English-speaking readers, the relative thematic narrowness of Shakespeare’s sonnets, which concern themselves chiefly with their quadrilateral erotics. Camões’s stylistic adventurousness makes his sonnets a veritable inventory of Renaissance sonnet-varieties, with his echo, his dialogues, his anagrams, his revisionary mythmaking, his heroic and elegiac and plaintive forms. Of course, like all significant poets, he is a master of intonation and cadence (matters I have not touched on here, because a native speaker of Portuguese

could both sense and describe them far better than I). The *Columbia Encyclopedia* says of Camões that even if he had never written the *Lusiads*, he would have won fame for his “flawless sonnets.” But these flawless sonnets are, for the English-speaking reader, a treasure unfindable in the florid artificiality of Burton. Should their flawlessness be hidden from us forever? Or will someone bring to life for us again, in the present century, Camões the sonneteer? Shakespeare, I suppose, must exist complete in Portuguese; so should Camões be granted his full presence in English.

Notes

¹ Luís de Camões, *Rimas*. Ed. Álvaro J. Da Costa Pimpão. (Coimbra: Atlântida, 1973). Citations will be drawn from this edition, and will be identified by sonnet number and page number. For the convenience of English-speaking readers, I have indicated, in Roman numerals, the number of the sonnet in the sole complete English translation: *Camoens: The Lyrics, Part I (Sonnets, Canzons, Odes, and Sextines)*, Englished by Richard F. Burton (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1884). Burton's diction is both archaic and over-elaborate, so much so as to be at times almost unintelligible.

² I transcribe this sonnet, since it is difficult to envisage it from a description:

Vencido está de Amor	meu pensamento
o mais que pode ser	vencida a vida,
sujeita a vos servir	instituída,
oferecendo tudo	a vosso intento.

Contente deste bem,	louva o momento,
ou hora em que se viu	não bem perdida;
mil vezes desejando	a tal ferida,
outra vez renovar	seu perdimento.

Com essa pretensão	está segura
a causa que me guia	nesta empresa,
não estranha, tão doce,	bonrosa e alta,

Jurando não seguir	outra ventura,
rotando só por vós	rara firmeza,
ou ser no vosso amor	achado em falta.

³ By “epitome” I mean a sonnet which instances several different objects, and then resumes them within the beloved at the close. In *Diversos dões*, the various gifts possessed severally by each goddess are at the end all bestowed on the beloved:

Mas junto agora o mesmo Céu derrama
Em ti o mais que tinha . . .

. . .te dão, fermosa Dama,
Diana, honestidade, a graça, Vénus,
Palas o aviso seu, Juno a nobreza.

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Second Attempt

Miguel Tamen

Abstract. In his well-known, and often very loose, paraphrase of Psalm 137, Camões suggests that he has “hung on the willow trees / The organs with which I had sung” (ll.54-55). This looks *prima facie* false, since he has already produced at least 53 lines after that event, and will go on to produce many more, to the total of 365. What is the status of a poetic composition that purports to escape the pitfalls of poetry, and, more to the point, what is the use of poetry if not that of perpetuating itself through elaborate excuses for its own emergence?

Luís de Camões’s paraphrase of Psalm 137 (or 136), “Super flumina Babylonis,” known in Portuguese as “Sobre os rios” or “Sóbolos rios,”¹ is a wonderful and deceptively well-known poem,² and so the kind of poem that prompts initial caveats, or at least a few promises. Here are my own: to the relief of most readers, I will not talk about Psalm 137; nor will I discuss the two versions of the title of the poem; thirdly, I will not interfere in the ongoing discussion about the date of the poem; fourthly, with one passing exception, I will not address the relatively intricate textual history of the poem;³ and, fifthly, most importantly, I will not draw any mileage from the fact that the poem, as published after 1595, has 365 lines, nor will I indulge in any numerological expeditions.

Several commentators have remarked, correctly in my view, that there is a crucial shift in tone around line 201 of the poem. The shift corresponds to the end of the manuscript version of 1578, in the *Cancioneiro de Cristóvão*

Borges. Talking about shifts in tone is often talking about not very palpable entities. Not so here: in the history of “Sobre os rios,” this shift in tone means that whereas up to line 200 you would tend to use as explanatory and descriptive tools general references to the Bible and to Orphic myths, after line 200 you normally switch toolboxes and tend to resort to less vague heavy artillery such as Plato and Augustine (and even, to believe one critic, the pseudo-Jerome). Both tool-sets prove useful when it comes to characterize Camões’s opinions both about his own poetry and his poem. And, more to the point, they were used by Camões himself to describe at least two incompatible doctrines about poetry.

No characterization of such doctrines, however cursory, would do without previously underscoring their connection with the conspicuous dualistic organisation of the poem. More than the nevertheless extensive references to Babel and Zion, what the Psalmist has given Camões was a compositional device whereby for every P there is a not-P lurking somewhere. The oppositions between heaven and earth, memory and reminiscence, and even between two kinds of poetry clearly belong here, not of course to the psalm but to the form the poem shares with the psalm. The device is so extensively used that minimal amounts of interpretive effort are required to come up with a general description of the poem—which explains not really why so many exegeses have been produced thereon as why they all resemble each other so much.

In the poem, the technical term for such a compositional device is ‘simile’ [‘comparação’]. The poem starts amidst the display of an impressive profusion of watery fluids. Shortly thereafter, however, some order is imposed:

Sobre os rios que vão
por Babilónia m’achei,
onde sentado chorei
as lembranças de Sião
e quanto nela passei.
Ali o rio corrente
de meus olhos foi manado,
e tudo bem comparado:
Babilónia ao mal presente,
Sião ao tempo passado. (1-10)⁴

The first stanza of the poem contains a short, but nevertheless surprising, narrative, which could be paraphrased as follows: I sit by the rivers of Babylon, I cry over my memories of Zion, tears spring from my eyes, and everything falls into place, that is, literally “everything was properly compared” (8). What is surprising is of course that the tearful poet finds in himself the strength to indulge in notoriously unsentimental tasks such as simile-making. The outcome of this first operation is the great meta-interpretive description of the poem, that no commentator has failed to notice: “Babylon to present woe / Zion to time past” (9-10). So if one were to summarize this little story, forgetting for a moment all about the impressive waterworks, one would come up with something as simple (and as surprising) as: the poet sits down by the rivers of Babylon and proceeds into explaining what it all means. This is sometimes called *allegoresis*. Terminological quibbles aside, one should remark that *allegoresis* is a very important energy-saving device, since the readers, from now on, will not be required to agonize over the meaning of any particular passage in the poem. The only thing they will have to do is to connect every problematic term with either Babel or Zion, and restate, however artfully, the dualistic structure so clearly indicated at the beginning of the poem.

I can now return to the incompatible theories about poetry that I mentioned earlier. The first theory is expounded in the context of a very long apostrophe to music (to be understood as *mousikē*, or the art of the Muses), that extends from lines 58 through 115. The apostrophe is a farewell to music, an important feature to which I will have to amply return below. Three lines into the apostrophe, “beloved music” (58) becomes “my flute” (61), and one is offered a description of the effects of flute-playing, the activity proper that is being deliberately forsaken:

Frauta minha que, tangendo,
os montes fazíeis vir
para onde estáveis, correndo;
e as águas, que iam decendo,
tornavam logo a subir.
Jamais vos não ouvirão
os tigres que se amansavam;
e as ovelhas, que pastavam,
das ervas se fartarão
que por vos ouvir, deixavam. (61-70)⁵

Along the lines of the description above, the musical activity performed with the help of a flute has effects that counter both the laws of physics (mountains run, waters change course) and some widely shared assumptions as to the natural dispositions of animals (tigers become tame, and sheep forget to graze and leave everything behind). One could of course resort to one's Orphic toolbox here, but that is not even required by my argument. It is enough to remark that flute-playing and thus poetry *lato sensu* makes things happen—the sorts of things that no assumptions about what can *plausibly* happen can encompass.

The second doctrine comes up much later in the poem. Instead of the flute one has a “lyre holy and capable / of higher forms of invention” (267-8). And instead of descriptions of effects, one has clear poetic prescriptions: “Let this confusion be silenc'd / The vision of peace be sung” (269-70). Of course, the prescriptions contain implicit descriptions of the *first* doctrine. Non-grazing sheep and moving mountains are not visions of peace, and there is an important sense in which tigers lying down with lambs are confused descriptions, or descriptions of a change in the natural order of things. Accordingly, within doctrine number two nothing physical ought to follow from poetry. It is in this sense that, as Auden once memorably remarked, “poetry makes nothing happen.”

So far, so good. Even if deep down in our physicalist hearts we all more or less agree that the second doctrine is true (all of us in the profession more or less carry the scars of our previous attempts at brandishing sonnets at reluctant tigers), the fable could therefore go as follows: whereas in my happy days in Jerusalem I could afford to indulge in paradox, a poet *in dürftiger Zeit* has other duties. Babel, so to speak, requires poetic order, whereas Zion can tolerate at least a certain amount of physical nonsense. This is therefore a fable about *why* there was a change in doctrine. One should never underestimate the charms of chiasmus (disorderly Babel requiring poetic order vs. orderly Zion dispensing with that same order), but of course one is merely reiterating the interpretive schema laid down at the beginning of the poem. No interpretation that succumbs to this dizzying array of contraries will ever be our own, for the simple reason that Camões had already anticipated it.

A different question, however, is that of knowing or describing *how* this major change was effected. Here again, the poem provides a special term that one should examine more closely. Almost immediately after the description of the second doctrine, Camões provides a new apostrophe, this time directed at shepherds and kings:

Ouçá-me o pastor e o rei,
 retumbe este acento santo,
 mova-se no mundo espanto,
 que do que já mal cantei
 a palinódia já canto. (271-5)⁶

This passage depends on a crucial distinction between the use of two verbal tenses: the perfect of “cantei” [“have sung”] and the present of “canto” [“sing”].⁷ “Palinode” is therefore a description of what I do now, which itself requires a description (and a negative evaluation) of what I have done in the past. The poem appears to be in its own terms a palinode, which seems to mean an act of atonement for past poems.

Even if the term *per se* is only introduced here, there are several and well-known images in the earlier part of the poem that appear to denote this kind of change. In lines 54-55, Camões suggests that he has “hung on the willow trees / The organs with which I had sung.”⁸ As we have seen, these organs are basically a flute. The passage is developed in lines 251-5 as

Fique logo pendurada
 a frauta com que tangi,
 ó Hierusalém sagrada,
 e tome a lira dourada
 para só cantar de ti! (251-5)⁹

One could be tempted to collapse the two passages, since after all they appear to instantiate the same emblem, whereby the end of a certain kind of poetry is assimilated with the ritual deposition of one’s poetic tools. This was after all what the Psalmist said about surrender, in the second verse of Psalm 137.¹⁰

In this second passage, nevertheless, the temporal structure is completely different: the taking up of the lyre is described as a *future* event, and the surrendering of the flute is rather a *present* event. Since, at least according to doctrine number two, nothing follows from poems, it would be totally inaccurate to describe this present event as some kind of performative. There are no ways for us to be sure of whether any act has actually taken place. This is not the proper time for me to vent my hostility towards literary glosses of speech-act theories. The fact remains that the description of the taking up of the lyre can only be made in flute-terms, as it were, and so of course the language of

palinode is inevitably the language one is trying to get rid of. The claim being made in the *earlier* passage is therefore *prima facie* false: nothing has been hung anywhere, except perhaps doctrine number two. A reverse effect, and a very puzzling one, is meanwhile the verb choice for the description of the flute playing, what I have uninspiredly rendered as “to play.” The Portuguese verb “tanger,” literally “to touch,” refers mainly to the playing of *string* instruments. Only very metaphorically is a flute ever “tangida.” Unless, of course, the flute is already a lyre.¹¹ If so, the taking up of the lyre in flute-terms is the sort of fable that can only be construed in lyre-terms. Again, this time, nothing is *being* hung anywhere—except perhaps doctrine number one.

To some, these questions might resemble a less talented version of the kind of waterworks the poem so adroitly displays elsewhere. And yet they point to a problem that I hope even the most ill-disposed reader might understand: is this the kind of poem one would write in Jerusalem (according to doctrines one *and* two) or, instead, is this yet another example of what Camões calls, in line 45, “confusão de Babel,” “Babel-like confusion” or babble? In other words, was the palinode successful, is the poem any good *on its own terms*, was Camões’s second attempt worthwhile? Put this way, of course, there is no clear answer. I do happen to believe nevertheless that there is an answer, and so I propose we leave the question unanswered for the time being, and try to change the description of our problem.

Changing a description means, of course, changing toolboxes again. The second part of the poem, immediately after line 200, starts out in a somewhat clumsy way, with a theological objection, followed by the answer, for which we had not been prepared before anywhere in the poem.

Mas ó tu, terra de Glória,
se eu nunca vi tua essência,
como me lembras na ausência?
Não me lembras na memória,
Senão na reminiscência. (201-5)¹²

Every student of theology would recognize here the answer to a predicament whose Christian form was first made famous by Augustine: “If I find Thee without memory, then am I un-’ mindful of Thee. And how now shall I find Thee, if I do not remember Thee?” (*Confessions*, 10:17, § 26).¹³ Given the fallenness of human beings, and the passage of time, how is one expected

to remember a place where one has never been, or an entity that has never come across one's senses? Augustine's answer consists of course in suggesting that whereas memory is the power of recalling empirical facts, that is, of justifying descriptions of facts to which I was present, memory per se is not enough. It is therefore necessary to "*transire memoriam*," to "pass beyond memory" (idem) into a realm where one remembers things one does not even remember having forgotten (idem, 10:20, §29).¹⁴ Rest assured, I will not dwell any further on the analogy (as well as on the substantial differences) between the Platonic realm of Ideas and Augustine's Heavenly Jerusalem. What interests me is what comes next in the poem:

Que a alma é tábuá rasa
 que, com a escrita doutrina
 celeste, tanto imagina
 que voa da própria casa,
 e sobe à pátria divina. (206-10)¹⁵

What comes next is a doctrine of the soul, now loosely Aristotelian, whereby the soul is described as a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate.¹⁶ The ascending movement towards Jerusalem is therefore predicated on a feature of the soul. There are some momentous features to this explanation of ascent: the "doctrine writ celestial" ignites the imagination and propels the soul upward and homeward. This is moreover an answer to a question we had seemingly left behind a while ago, namely the question of knowing *how* is palinode at all possible. Palinode is possible, the poem appears to tell us, because the soul is infinitely writeable. The *tabula rasa* feature of the soul, one could say, is what allows for ever more perfect second attempts. For the poet, this means that he can plausibly hope, as Camões puts it in lines 264-5, that "Cancelled out be all I've done / From the great book of the living."¹⁷ No failed attempt is ever final, and, more to the point, no trace of one's previous misadventures can remain after successful take off.

Or can it? The detail of the text is again important for this precision. And what is explicitly said therein is that the flight so described takes place through and within the imagination. This is a crucial swerve from Plato's, Aristotle's, and Augustine's distinctions, that nevertheless Camões appears to quote. The fable is now substantially different from those of any of his philosophical precursors: old empty soul, prey to certain images conveyed by holy writ, flies

away from home and eventually *imagines* heaven. Thus says, at the very end of the poem, a final apostrophe to “divino aposento,” “divine abode” (356):

Ó tu, divino aposento,
 minha pátria singular!
 Se só com te imaginar
 tanto sobe o entendimento,
 que fará se em ti se achar? (356-60)¹⁸

What, indeed. Not much, possibly, but *surely* not poetry. The passage depends crucially again on two verbs, denoting two opposed actions affecting the understanding (also in the sense of ‘intellect’): “imaginar” (“to imagine”) and “achar-se” (“to be there,” or “to find oneself there”). Alas, for the understanding to come home (or, as Camões puts it a little earlier, using his own Platonic toolbox, for “understanding to pass / On to the intelligible world,” 344-5), the understanding person has to be dead, even if death is itself described, as in the last line of the poem, as “eternal rest” (365). And, of course, as long as one is writing poems, whether flute-propped or lyre-propped, one still remains uncontroversially alive. So poems can be at most *prospective* descriptions of a future world, which is to say, always, at best, acts of the imagination. Describing moving mountains or heavenly details is always describing acts of the imagination. We must consequently somewhat bid farewell to our laborious distinction between doctrine one and doctrine two.

There is thus something that remains permanently unchanged, regardless of the fact that one, say, a poet, is empirically located in Babel or Jerusalem. No amount of lyre-playing will give one eternal rest—which is after all a way of saying that all edifying poetry out of one’s Augustinian toolbox is undistinguishable from all non-edifying poetry out of one’s diffuse Orphic toolbox. The poem therefore, provides a negative, if contradictory, answer to the question we left suspended a few minutes ago: all poems are babble, and no amount of poetry will ever *clarify* poetry, let alone redeem one from poetry (compare with ‘no attempt to purify language will ever redeem one from language’). The only conceptually relevant difference would be at most one between Babel *and* Jerusalem, on the one hand, and *heavenly* Jerusalem, on the other. The *description* of that difference, whether poetic or theological, nevertheless, is always nonsensical babble, however well intentioned. Not by chance commenting on Psalm 137, Augustine remarks that in this sense all

human language comes down as "... a strange tongue, a barbarous tongue, which we have learnt in our captivity" (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 137, §9).

This appears to give a completely different sense to palinode-talk and indeed to 'second attempt.' It also forces us into a far more complex understanding of 'understanding.' It is relatively easy to see why 'palinode' now means something completely unlike atonement. In fact, if poetry can bring no redemption, atonement is at most the expression of a wish,¹⁹ and atonement through language always ends up by deplorably producing more of the poetry one was trying to evacuate in the first place. If palinode, therefore, is a general description of the self-perpetuation of poetry, then poetry cannot under that description be said to achieve any kind of cognitive insight, nor can the poet be said to understand anything proper. "That which we value the most," Camões had already written very early in the poem, "Is thus better understood / As more completely lost" (32-4). This is perhaps good advice for poets, but an even better, and more sardonic, remark on how our own descriptions of poetry, no matter how dithyrambic and well-meaning, are always bound to counter not only Augustine's dark verdict on language as this poem's even darker verdict on poetry.

Notes

¹ I use the text as published by Maria de Lourdes Saraiva in Luís de Camões, *Lírica Completa* (Lisbon: IN/CM, 1980) 1: 273-88. All translations mine. Occasionally, Keith Bosley's elegant but inaccurate translation, was used as a starting point. L. C. Taylor, ed., *Camões: Epic and Lyric* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1990) 76-81. I have always tried to render the literal form of the poem and, when at all possible, the word order itself.

² For a sample of the literature available see Manuel Augusto Rodrigues, "'Sobolos rios que vão' à luz da exegese bíblica moderna," *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português*, 16 (Paris: Gulbenkian, 1981) 387-425.

³ The best synopsis of these three topics can be found in Arthur Lee-Francis Askins, ed., *The Cancioneiro de Cristóvão Borges* (Braga: Barbosa Xavier, 1979) 207-27.

⁴ "Beside the rivers that stream / Through Babylon I found myself / Where sitting down I have cried / My recollection of Zion / And what therein I have been through. / Thereupon the running river / Of mine eyes has sprung forth / And everything properly compared: / Babylon to present woe / Zion to time past."

⁵ "Flute of mine, when played upon / You have made the mountains come / Running to where you were; / And the waters, purling down, / Would immediately go up. / No longer shall you be heard / By the tigers turned so tame; / And the ewes at pasture there, / Of their grass shall be forgotten / And depart to hear your sound" (61-7).

⁶ "Listen shepherd, listen king / Let this holy accent ring / Let the world with terror fill / Of that I have sung ill / Now the palinode I sing."

⁷ I am deliberately omitting a very important complication, as "canto" will be used very ambiguously in l.335 in "cabeça do Canto," "head of Song," which, in connection to "pedra"

("rock," or "stone," 334) will also become "cornerstone": as Bosley has it, "... the stone which is the head / Of the corner in this age" (334-5). Poetry, in this sense, becomes the "rock" or "stone" of the Scriptures, mentioned e.g. in Psalms 118:22 and Isaiah 28:16 ("I am laying a stone in Zion, a stone that has been tested, A precious cornerstone as a sure foundation; he who puts his faith in it shall not be shaken") and in the synoptic gospels (Mt 21:42, Mk 12:10, Lk 20:17)

8 "nos salgueiros pendurei / os órgãos com que cantava."

9 "So let it stay hanging there / The flute with which I have played, / O sacred Jerusalem, / Taking up the golden lyre / So I sing only of Thee!"

10 The Psalmist, in the Vulgate translation of "ta organa" from the Greek of the Septuagint ("in salicibus in medio eius suspendimus organa nostra") was talking about "organa," which can mean in both Latin and Greek 'instruments,' 'military engines or tools,' and 'pipes' (as in a musical instrument) (cf. e.g. Lewis & Short, s.v. *organum*; Liddell & Scott, s.v. *organon*). In the Latin translation from the Hebrew, that Camões of course did not follow, one has "citharas" (acc. pl.), 'citharas,' 'guitars' or 'lutes' (Lewis & Short, s.v. *cithara*) instead, translating the Hebrew "knrvtyv" from 'kinnowr,' 'harp' or 'lyre.' One can easily imagine the Greek translator, unsure as to the specific technical meaning of "knrvtyv," using the general word for musical instruments in Greek that unfortunately also meant pipe-instruments and military instruments (and which was then faithfully translated into Latin). So the Hebrew harp has turned into various objects, among which a flute.

11 Which of course it (more or less) is, as the word for flute was mistakenly taken as synonymous with the word for lyre (see previous note). Perhaps the Camões poem is in this sense a poetic correction of that error and so a classic case of poetic justice at work.

12 "But O Thou glorious land, / If I never saw thine essence / How doest thou call me in absence? / Thou recallest not from mem'ry, / Yet from reminiscence."

13 "Si praeter memoriam meam te inuenio, immemor tui sum. Et quomodo iam inueniam te, si memor non sum tui?"

14 "longing to learn it as a thing unknown, which either I had never known, or had so forgotten it as not even to remember that I had forgotten it [*sive quam sic oblitus fuerim, ut me nec oblitum esse meminerim*]" (*Confessions*, 10:20, §29).

15 "For the soul is a clean slate / That, with doctrine writ celestial / By dint of imagination / Flies away from its own home / Ascending to land divine."

16 *De Anima*, 429b24-430a2, famously quoted by Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae*, I.79.2. A related, equally famous, metaphor in Plato, *Theaetetus*, 191c-e.

17 "risque-se quanto já fiz / do grão livro dos viventes." (264-5).

18 "O thou divine abode / My singular homeland! / If only by imagining thee / So ascends the Understanding / What shall it do once it's there?"

19 See *Confessions*, 10:20, §29, namely the references to a *beata uita* "longing to learn it as a thing unknown [*per appetitum discendi incognitam*]."

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"Bárbara escrava": Canon, beauty and color: An embarrassing contradiction

Rita Marnoto

Abstract. The Petrarchan literary canon revered white-skinned, fair-haired women, and this model held sway over all European literature. Camões respectfully followed it in most of his poetic works. However, he dedicated a poem, in which love is presented as an extremely gratifying experience, to a black slave, Bárbara, and it is usually considered among his most beautiful poems. The representation of beauty and happiness in Bárbara entails an association of problematic factors that has received a great deal of commentary throughout the centuries. This article focuses on these readings in the light of "mimicry" as conceived by Homi Bhabha.

It seems impossible that such a *dark* person could have inspired such beautiful poetry. Chateaubriand translated these poems into French.

[Parece impossível que sujeito tão *escuro* inspirasse tão linda poesia. Chateaubriand traduziu para francês estes versos.]

—Visconde de Juromenha.

This was Juromenha's brief commentary on the "trovas" that Camões wrote "to a slave called Bárbara with whom he was much enamored in India" (464), in the compact six-volume edition Juromenha published between 1860 and 1869.¹ It is as succinctly put as it is subtle and disquieting.

During the long period between the Renaissance and the outset of Romanticism in European literature, the Petrarchan example was a model establishing the same code for recognized aesthetic and human values. In

relation to the representation of the feminine form, a woman is exalted when her physical beauty seems at one with the perfection of her soul. She is described according to a standard set of rhetorical devices: her blond hair seems like gold, the sparkle in her eyes is comparable to sunrays, her cheeks roses, her lips coral and her teeth pearls.

Camões reverently followed this example as well. However, if Laura was already a presence marked by eternal absence in Petrarch as a symbol of the impossibility of a truly gratifying experience, the fissures that make a torment of love are further deepened in Camões's lyrical poetry. In this context, the poem to "Bárbora escrava" holds a very special place both in European literature and in Camões's work itself.² It has raised delicate interpretative questions since very early on. In fact, Camões not only subverts a literary canon that had survived for centuries, but also very deep-rooted cultural structures. Petrarchan woman's superiority is openly challenged in his poetry:

Pretos os cabelos,
 onde o povo vão
 perde opinião
 que os louros são belos.
 Pretidão de Amor,
 tão doce a figura,
 que a neve lhe jura
 que trocara a cor.

The fact that the poet recognizes the canon accentuates even more the significance of his aloofness from it. But this attitude cannot be separated from the derogation of a hierarchy of historical, social and anthropological values that takes on a structural function. Petrarchan sixteenth-century discourse towards discourse is overlaid with discourse and discourse with the otherness. Camões derogates the presumption according to which the slave's color, gender and class confine her to a marginalized and subaltern position. Bárbora's beauty is unmatched by that of any Laura. Besides, the idealized notion of a link between physical perfection and spiritual perfection, a neo-Platonism, bestows on the poet the love and harmony that Petrarch always aspired to but never achieved. By the same token, the split between slave and master disappears:

Presença serena
 que a tormenta amansa;
 nela enfim descansa
 toda a minha pena.
 Esta é a cativa
 que me tem cativo,
 e, pois nela vivo,
 é força que viva.

As Juromenha's commentary reveals, Camões's readers found it extremely embarrassing to have to accept the presentation of this idea of beauty and happiness through the subversion of a scholarly literary canon thus opening the way to difference and diversity that surmounts the boundaries of color, gender and class. So embarrassing was it that for centuries the great interpretative questions raised by this poem have led to various efforts to reinvent Bárbara. It is the meaning behind these readings that I now intend to explore.

The first critic to attach special importance to Camões's slave was Manuel de Faria e Sousa in his comments in *Rimas várias*, published between 1685 and 1689. He wrote with reference to the tenth song's line, "A piedade humana me faltava," that Camões was so poverty-stricken that he was reduced to begging. He was helped not by the rich but by the poor. Four small coins here, two there or even just one when it wasn't "a plate of disgusting food that was sold at the doors of the miserable in Lisbon."³ Then suddenly Bárbara appears, a mulatto woman who gives the poet a plateful of the food she sells, as well as a few coins. The symbolic properties he attributes to her are also used as a reproof when he makes a pun on her name: "Oh civil Barbarian, who taught those very barbarous Portuguese Deities to be civil!"⁴

In comments on the tenth ode, "Aquele moço fero," Bárbara again becomes the theme. In Faria e Sousa's opinion, it was written when Camões was in India and much enamored of a slave of his. She was "not only a slave but black: my poet was, after all, made of flesh and blood."⁵ He identifies her as the woman to whom the poem was written and says she never came to Lisbon. He enthusiastically defends two causes: her blackness and the admirable tradition of praising the beauty of women who are not blond. To justify that in fact she "was black as the night," he remarks that Camões "carefully forgot to mention color, and by her demeanor and form tacitly makes it understood that the fact that his slave was black did not rule out that she

was beautiful.”⁶ He compiles a list of texts and writers on similar subjects and transforms Andromeda and the queen of Sheba into renowned black women. In his efforts to understand, for the sake of his poet, he even makes the concept of beauty a relative matter, writing that if “among blacks the most appreciated for their beauty are the darkest, [...] among whites it is the whitest of women.”⁷ Camões escapes his moral condemnation for these reasons. But only up to a point: “and hence he cannot be blamed for this love for longer than when she was his slave.”⁸

We search in vain for the logic of Faria e Sousa’s reflections. One slave or two of the same name? In India or else in Lisbon? Black or mulatto? Lover or compassionate cook? If the quantity of possibilities fascinated Faria e Sousa, a man who lived in the Baroque era, that exuberance is heightened in this case by his genuine devotion to “his poet,” “*mi poeta*,” as he used to write. However, his comments on the “*trovas*” dedicated to the slave Bárbara were never published.⁹ Despite this fact, Faria e Sousa undoubtedly influenced the way the theme was viewed in the following centuries.

Besides, I believe that the discourse that post-Enlightenment civility dedicated to Camões’s “*trovas*” is profoundly marked by the process of the representation of the other, which Homi Bhabha called mimicry, as “the sign of a double articulation: a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power.”¹⁰ This is thus a forked, ambiguous discourse that accepts the difference and causes a slippage. On the one hand, Bárbara is “appropriated” through her integration into a system that disciplines power and knowledge. Yet, on the other hand, she is differentiated by her color, gender and social status, signs of the “inappropriate,” of a difference that is almost the same but not quite. Consequently, she emerges visible at the side of interdiction and becomes at once incomplete and virtual, resemblance and menace. The counterpoint between the factual and fictional is clear in any case in the ambivalent and ironic compromise reached between resorting to historical facts and the repetition of some legendary stories about Camões. This discourse points to two main interpretations.

The first current “normalizes” Bárbara as part of his work-related world, and avoids explicit allusions to a sensual relationship that might have existed between her and the poet in line with Faria e Sousa’s comments on the tenth song. The beautiful black woman who inspired Camões to write a poem about the raptures of passion remains “inappropriate” in order to confound the contradictions involving her beauty and the happiness she offered her

lover. As a woman, she is assigned to where 19th-century society relegated women, that is to say, domestic service. And so, Bárbara is a cook. Wilhelm Storck, who says she was a mulatto woman baptized “Luísa Bárbara,”¹¹ writes that she was a housekeeper in India and an excellent cook. According to his biography, when Camões invited his friends to dinner and offered them his famous poem *Convite* as a meal, it was Bárbara who prepared a real dinner for them. The guests’ banter stopped when she came into the room “to serve the first course of the joyful dinner and fill their glasses with good Portuguese wine.”¹² This scene stirred such strong feelings in the eminent translator, Carolina Michaëlis, that she added a footnote in which, complicit with the reader, she remarks on the actual excess that characterizes mimicry:¹³

The reader will say if I exceed myself by adding just another detail to the picture Storck painted. At the end of the meal, the happy friends celebrate the culinary skills of Luísa Bárbara, who modestly evades the compliments lavished on her [...]. But the Poet and Host, raising his glass, gets up and toasts Luísa Bárbara, whose calm gaze and presence had so captivated his heart, and introducing her to his friends, he sings in an excess of youthful impetuosity:

Esta é a cativa,
que me tem cativo,
e pois nela vivo,
é força que viva!

The cosmic importance attributed to love as vital élan slips with the exclamation and the text’s appearance concurrently change to “*Viva!*” Bárbara is integrated metonymically. She does her work with great skill and is summoned to the dining room, although Carolina suggests that Camões is not indifferent to her. A crisis thus develops for the cultural priority given to the metaphoric that demands re-articulation of the axis of metonymy. The difference is not repressed but negotiated with relation to metonymy so as to create what Homi Bhabha designates as fantastic and elusive “identity effects.”¹⁴

The desire for a reformed, recognizable Bárbara also involves the representation of her relationship with Camões within a lower hierarchical context in which her otherness is avowed in the framework of an ideal of charity. In the first biography of Camões, which was published in the first pages of the 1613 edition of *The Lusíads*, Pedro Mariz says that when the poet returned

from India, he was so impoverished that he didn't even have enough money to give his Javanese slave to buy charcoal.¹⁵ And thus was born the legend of the slave who begged in the streets of Lisbon in order to provide for his master. The Bárbara who alleviates Camões in his destitute state towards the end of his life could well be interpreted as the feminine counterpart of the Javanese slave. António Feliciano de Castilho wrote of her "generous ways" and extreme delicacy in his play called *Camões*.¹⁶

[Camões:] How long would we have gone without eating had it not been for her charity, António! And what's more, the poor thing is among Christ's meekest. It has always been thus: generous, generous and kind to help without shaming the poor. At night, she sells seafood in the streets, and flowers in the morning, now at the S. Domingos church door, then and more often where we first found her: in Terreiro do Paço next to Casa dos Contos. That's because from there—so she tells me—she can see the sea and the caravels that come and go and everything gives her a feeling of great yearning. Poor Bárbara!

The "poor" mulatto woman is so sensitive that she chooses her working place according to her feelings. It is not only food she gives Camões. She also gives him a small bunch of flowers that he will take to his grave. However, Bárbara is disavowed as a character. She hands him her gifts, finds out how the poet is and leaves without ever satisfying his desire to see her. She is a dramatic metonymy, an object of discourse that never materializes on the stage. This interdictory desire is the strategic objective that Bhabha calls the metonymy of presence.¹⁷

To finalize the imagery linked with food, Costa e Silva should be recalled. With this distinguished critic, following Faria e Sousa's plateful of food and Castilho's street cry of the shellfish vendor, there is also the matter of selling "mussels,"¹⁸ common enough in eighteenth-century Lisbon. Rather complacently, Costa e Silva unhesitatingly states that "beauty comes in all colors"¹⁹ but does not believe that Camões was ever "madly enamored of that nice little black girl" and argues²⁰:

[I remember] what Dr. Swift's housekeeper once said to a lady who congratulated her on being loved by a man of such genius, who praised her in much of his verse. "Ah, my lady, you say that because you do not know that the Dean is quite capable of saying even sweeter things and writing even finer verse to the broom I sweep the house with!"

The second form of representation is based on the relationship between Camões and Bárbara in line with Faria e Sousa's commentary on the tenth ode. It is closely linked with the legendary stories about Camões's life that portray him as a great lover, a "tough guy" getting into street fights and living with people not of his class. The "life" written by Visconde de Juromenha is a good indication as to how well this portrayal of Camões was received in the nineteenth century.²¹ The harmony between sensual love and spiritual love, as it appears in the text of the poem, is subject to a split. Consequently, the metonymic importance of the former leads to the representation of an explicitly erotic experience. The emergence of this aspect was not easily accepted within the framework of nineteenth-century morals. Hence the vindicating anguish, between guilt, pardon and complicity, which appears in the extravagance of the various attempts to discipline Bárbara, black, slave and lover, by means of the ruse of desire.

Xavier da Cunha clearly expresses the menace within that resemblance:²²

Love [...] love [...] I don't think and nobody thinks that what civilized peoples understand as "love" is a feeling that can be attributed to people born into the uncouth savage state in which they remain; and it is in these animal-like circumstances that the African black invariably lives.

We thus owe to his erudition one of the most determined attempts to create an authorized version of Bárbara's otherness. It is an 851-page book, beautifully printed and bound.²³ If Juromenha had already dealt with the beauty of the poem, which Chateaubriand recognized when he translated it into French, Xavier da Cunha collected over 100 translations of his text. In order to counter such an embarrassing contradiction, Cunha argued that Bárbara was not black, but dark, swarthy perhaps and tanned by the sun, or then mulatto at the very most:²⁴

"Black is her hair!"—please note. Nobody has ever said that about the woolly mop on an African's head! And would it then be reasonable to accept that an admirer of blond hair, as Camões prided himself on being at every moment, would favor the horrible hair of some horrible Ethiopian over the "golden tresses" of his true love?

Besides, Bárbara could not have been Camões's slave because he couldn't afford one. She was the slave of the governor, Francisco Barreto, which made her subject to ill-treatment.²⁵ Xavier da Cunha thus manages to avoid questions

of color and class, and makes Camões a victim of punishment. But then why had he fallen in love with her? Almost white but not quite: "And what can be proved [...] What can be proved is that [...] *Variatio delectat*," he decides.²⁶ Camões's true love was for women of his own class. Even Teófilo Braga, for whom Camões "never rowed with just one oar in amorous matters,"²⁷ says he had three great loves, all of whom belonged to the nobility: Isabel Tavares, Francisca de Aragão and Catarina de Ataíde.²⁸ Bárbara is the other.

Juromenha, who was one of the first to refer explicitly to the eroticism in the relationship, says that "this distraction" was due to the fact that Camões was growing senile, and that "growing lonely and in the world of darkness, he seems to also want to live in *darkness*."²⁹ In whitening Bárbara, Xavier da Cunha got to distinguish various slaves in Faria e Sousa's commentary. According to him, the beautiful and sensual Bárbara of the poem was not the one who came to Lisbon and helped him in his old age. Juromenha was of a different opinion. By means of ambiguous discourse, he brings together Camões's lover and financial prop. This could only happen because "the most sincere of souls" dwelt in "a black body." Being so, the relationship is "normalized" within the framework of a hypothetical system of exchange whereby the relief Bárbara afforded his "life torments" was compensated by the "gratitude that goes beyond the confines of friendship."³⁰ A reciprocal relationship is thereby established outside those differences of color, gender and class that Juromenha does not neglect. This articulation of reality and desire contains in itself such strong contradictions that its development cannot leave a representational authority out of it.

Teófilo Braga understood this. Teófilo wrote a great deal on the life and work of Luís de Camões in a critical approach that developed as it evolved. His writing on Bárbara grows in crescendo as he collects the authoritative opinion of celebrated connoisseurs of the charms of "Indian, Malay, Javanese, Dravidian and Malabar women, ranging from the ivory white to the pitch black, almost metallic": Linschott, François Pyrard, Anquetil du Perron, Chateaubriand, or Alberto Osório de Castro.³¹ François Pyrard's knowledge ensures him that "among slaves, there are some very beautiful and lovely girls from all parts of India and most of them know how to play musical instruments, embroider, cook deliciously as well as make all kinds of sweets, preserves and other things."³² Bárbara becomes a "complete woman," mistress of all talents. A dancing-girl who sang to Camões "passionate popular Hindu and Hindustan love poetry."³³ Trying to solve the big problems connected with deeply rooted cultural canon and structures, Teófilo understands from his research that:³⁴

It can be conjectured that it was Camões who was sought after according to the custom described by Pyrrard: “all these women from India, be they Christian or mulatto, prefer to have dealings with a European, an old Christian, rather than with Indians, and what’s more, they are given money and feel greatly honored for it, because they love white men very much, and even if there are very white Indians, they don’t like them so much.”

The slippage of mimicry has a boomerang effect. Western male behavior is transferred to the Eastern female domain. European man himself is subject to a historical religious differentiation that enhances the superiority of old Christians. As such, the incompleteness of female representation is disavowed. The otherness of Bárbara is the same. “It is then,” as Homi Bhabha writes, “that the body and the book lose their representational authority”.³⁵

It could be for this reason that Agostinho de Campos in his comments on Camões’s “trovas” maintains himself at a distance from Teófilo and the “example of muddling *ethos* with other more or less blackened or inferior *ethos*”.³⁶ In his opinion, the problem lies in the fact that:³⁷

Portugal still practices today in Africa what it used to do in India, China, Malaysia and America, that is to say a form of colonization that crosses, confuses and mixes local native races, or then races it has transplanted from one conquered area to another. This is how Portugal has always carried out its colonization, not with any political idea in mind, but with some mawkish kindness that prevents men from risking white women’s health and lives to the dangers of tropical climes; with a lack of sense that prevents Portugal from handling their environment with method and efficiency so that a European couple may settle far away from home and live under suitable conditions, as the British have always managed; with a lack of pride in race and an overflowing paternal heart that makes our colonizers keep and bring up their mixed-blood children as lovingly as if they were pure-blooded. And thus, when we have, as we should, stopped forgetting all about this, we will easily reach the conclusion that our Camões is definitely one of us when he speaks in his beautiful poetry of the beauty of the Bárbaras and his great longing for the Dinamenes.

More embarrassing than the contradiction between canon, color and beauty seems to be the process of mimicry itself.

Notes

¹ Juromenha 464.

² Further developed by Marnoto. Cited poem comes from Camões, *Rimas* 89-90. As in this edition, I have maintained the dissimilation of the name "Bárborá." There is a play on words, as "Bárborá" is the old Portuguese spelling for Barbara, and also means "barbarian," as in "Bárborá escrava," "barbarian female slave."

³ Sousa, *Rimas várias de Luís de Camões*: "Fue tanto assi esto , que llegó a pedir limosna, y a no hallarla, a lo menos en los Portugueses grandes, que estos son los grandes Portugueses. Vióse reduzido un Hombre que solo fue mayor que todos ellos juntos, a acetar de personas comunes los quatro reales, y los dós, y a un el real para no morirse de hambre. Que digo el real de personas comunes? Acetava el plato de asqueroso mantenimiento que se anda a vender por las puertas de los miserables en Lisboa."

⁴ Sousa: "O Bárbara politica, que ensinavas a ser politicas aquellas barbarissimas Deidades Portuguesas!"

⁵ Sousa, segunda parte, t. 3, 179, vol. 2: "y no solo esclava, mas aun negra: que, alfin, era de carne mi Poeta."

⁶ Sousa 183: "era negra como la noche esta esclava; [...] sino que como esta fuesse negra, se olvida cuyadosissimo de hablar en colores, y vase á asir de la forma, y del ayre deste cuerpo y tacitamente dá á entender que el ser negra su esclava no la excluía de hermosa."

⁷ Sousa 184: "Entre los negros es máspreciado de hermoso el que es más negro, como entre los blancos la muger más blanca."

⁸ Sousa: "y assi no puede ser culpado en estos amores más de en quanto eran con esclava suya." In a commentary on other compositions, such as, for instance, the sonnet, "Em prisões baixas fui um tempo atado" (primeira parte, t. 1, 15, vol. 1), Faria e Sousa addresses the moral problem and refers to the punishments inflicted on the poet's focus for having loved a slave.

⁹ The commentary was in eight volumes and completed before 1646. Faria e Sousa died three years later and only the first five were to be published posthumously. Part of the eclogues, redondillas, comedies and prose consequently remain unpublished.

¹⁰ Bhabha 153.

¹¹ Luísa Bárbara was the name given by Juromenha, who was inspired by satirical poems written in Camões's time which make fun of his love for a black woman and that played with the feminine form of the name (*Obras* 1: 156-7 e 506).

¹² Storck, *Vida e obras de Luís de Camões* 618-9: "a servir o primeiro prato da alegre ceia e a encher de bom vinho português os copos dos comensais." Despite not acknowledging that Camões had allowed himself to be influenced by a dissolute Eastern way of life (500-1), Storck sees the sonnet, "Em prisões baixas fui um tempo atado," in line with Faria e Sousa, as an act of repentance for "the low and unworthy sensual feelings that had ensnared him" (623): "[pela] afeição sensual, sem elevação nem carácter, que o enleara."

¹³ Storck 619: "O leitor dirá, se me excedo, acrescentando mais um pomenor, ampliando o quadro traçado por Storck: No fim do jantar, os amigos alegres festejaram a arte culinária de Luísa Bárbara, que se esquivou, modesta, aos louvores dos convidados... Mas o Poeta e Anfitrião, erguendo o cálix, levantou, brindando, vivas à Luísa Bárbara, cujos olhos sossegados e cuja presença tinham cativado o seu coração, e apresentando-a aos amigos, cantou em um acesso de ímpeto juvenil."

¹⁴ Bhabha 157.

¹⁵ Mariz n. pag.

¹⁶ Castilho 1: 184: "[Camões:] Quantos dias, se não fora a sua caridade, não houvéramos

passado sem comer, António! E mais, coitada, é uma pobre de Cristo. Sempre assim foi: mãos largas, mãos largas, e delicadeza para acudir, sem envergonhar os pobres. De noite, apregoa marisco por essas ruas; de manhã, vende ramilhetes, uma hora no alpendre de S. Domingos, outra hora e as mais das vezes onde nós a achámos em desembarcando: no Terreiro do Paço, ao pé da Casa dos Contos. É porque de ali—me disse ela—se vê o mar, e as caravelas que vêm e vão, que tudo lhe faz muita saudade. Pobre Bárbara!”

¹⁷ Bhabha 156.

¹⁸ Silva 211.

¹⁹ Silva: “a beleza é de todas as cores.”

²⁰ Silva: “[lembro-me] da resposta dada pela Ama do Doutor Swift a uma Lady, que lhe dava os parabéns de ser amada por homem de tanto engenho, e que tanto a celebrava nos seus versos. ‘Ah, Senhora, dizéis isso, porque não sabéis que o Deão é capaz de dizer ainda finezas mais ternas, e cousas mais galantes em verso, à vasoura, com que eu varro a casa!’”

²¹ Storck 1: 156 e passim.

²² Cunha 156: “Amor... amor... aquilo que em linguagem de povos civilizados se entende por ‘amor,’ não creio e não crê ninguém que seja sentimento atribuível a indivíduos que nascem, vivem, e se conservam numa situação de selvagens boçais; e nessas circunstâncias de animalidade está invariavelmente o preto de África.”

²³ A large undertaking financially as well. Only 300 copies were printed and numbered on six different qualities of paper, especially and exclusively made as gifts. They may still be examined today for general research into Portuguese and foreign bibliography into this matter.

²⁴ Cunha 152: “‘Pretos os cabelos!’—note-se bem. Nunca ninguém tal disse da emaranhada carapinha de uma africana! E seria então lícito admitir que um admirador do loiro, como Camões se prezava de confessar-se a cada passo, viesse pôr em relevo, ante o ‘aureo crino’ do seu constante amor, o horrorroso topete de uma horrorosíssima etíope?”

²⁵ Cunha 243-50.

²⁶ Cunha 237: “E o que se prova... O que se prova é que... *Variatio delectat*.”

²⁷ Braga, *Camões. Época e vida* 578: “[Camões] em amor nunca andou a um só remo.”

²⁸ In the work specifically addressed to *Os amores de Camões*.

²⁹ Storck 1: 157-8: “esta distração parece que só teve lugar depois que a morte apagou aquela luz radiante que o vivificava, e que ficando solitário, e em trevas no mundo, parece que também nas trevas queria viver.”

³⁰ Storck 1: 158: “Talvez a alma mais cândida habitasse um corpo negro [...] lhe amansasse os tormentos da vida, lhe adoçasse as amarguras, e assim a gratidão ultrapassasse os limites da amizade.”

³¹ Braga, *Camões. Época e vida* 575-9: “índianas, malaías, javanesas, drávidas e malabares, desde o branco ebúrneo à cor retinta, quase metálica.”

³² Braga, *Camões e o sentimento nacional* 36: “Entre as escravas, encontram-se ali raparigas mui belas e lindas, de todas as partes da Índia, as quais pela maior parte sabem tanger instrumentos, bordar, coser mui delicadamente e fazer toda a sorte de doces, conservas e outras coisas.”

³³ Braga, *Camões. Época e vida* 577: “estrofes da apaixonada poesia popular indú e indústânica.”

³⁴ Braga, *Camões e o sentimento nacional* 37: “É de supor ter sido Camões o requestado, pelo que se depreende dos costumes descritos por Pyrrard: ‘todas estas mulheres da Índia, assim as cristãs ou mestiças, desejam mais ter trato com um homem da Europa, cristão velho, do que com os índios, e ainda em cima lhe dariam dinheiro, havendo-se por mui honradas por isso, porque elas amam muito os homens brancos, e ainda que haja índios mui brancos, não gostam tanto deles.’”

³⁵ Bhabha 158.

³⁶ Campos 83: “caso de mixorofada do *ethos* com outros *ethos* mais ou menos enfarruscados e inferiores.”

³⁷ Campos 76-7: “Portugal continua a fazer hoje em África, como ontem fez na Índia, na China, na Malásia e na América, uma colonização de cruzamento, da confusão e mistura com as raças locais, autóctones, ou por ele próprio transplantadas de umas Conquistas para outras. Assim colonizou sempre e coloniza ainda Portugal, não por princípio político, mas por bondade piegas, que inibe os homens de arriscarem a saúde e a vida das mulheres brancas na fereza dos climas tropicais; por deficiência de tino organizador, que impede o Português de preparar nas colónias a luta metódica e eficaz contra o ambiente físico, em ordem a estabelecer ao longe em condições vivendas, como sempre conseguem os Ingleses, o seu casal europeu; por falta de orgulho de raça e abundância de coração paternal, que leva os nossos colonizadores a guardar e educar o filho mestiço, tão ternamente como se fosse de sangue puro. E assim, quando tenhamos, como nos cumpre, deixado de esquecer tudo isto, facilmente concluiremos que o nosso Camões se revela bem nosso, quando nos conta em belos versos a beleza das Bárbaras ou a saudade das Dinamenes.”

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Conceptual Oppositions in the Poetry of Camões

Helder Macedo

Abstract. Camões was the first major European poet with direct experience of alien cultures, gained during his seventeen years in Africa and the East. His poetry explores conceptually opposed ideological viewpoints, injecting new meanings into the literary language of the European tradition. By giving greater emphasis to experience than to belief, both in his lyric poetry and in his epic, Camões suggests new ways of understanding the world in which he lived.

The poetry of Camões has lent itself to the most contradictory and even conceptually irreconcilable interpretations. For example, Petrarchism and anti-Petrarchism in the lyric poetry; imperialism and anti-imperialism in *Os Lusíadas*. The problem is not so much that some of these interpretations must be wrong but rather that none of them is completely so; it is therefore a problem that may permit a better understanding of the complexity of a work that, despite all more or less reductive readings, has always managed to re-emerge with its essential integrity untouched.

The originality of Camões's poetry tends to express itself in subtle semantic shifts within the tradition to which it belongs, a tradition that obviously includes Dante, Petrarch and, in broader terms, Renaissance Christian neo-Platonism. Camões thus remains within the mainstream of the poetry of his time while at the same time deviating from it, being capable of a radicalism so extreme that, in the context of Counter-Reformation orthodoxy, it frequently borders on heresy. Camões was the poet of a world in transition. He

was around eighteen years old when the first *auto-da-fé* was celebrated in the promiscuous Lisbon of his unruly youth. Later, as punishment for his scandalous social behaviour, he spent seventeen years in the East in an exile that was only formally voluntary. He was thus the first European poet with considerable first-hand experience of worlds and cultures as different as those of southern Africa, India and Indo-China.

All language is made up of the past rather than the future. Camões, even before his exile, had learned to use ostensibly traditional themes and an apparently conservative diction to express ideas and experiences for which there was not yet an adequate language. In doing so, he was also contrasting doubt with certainty, rupture with continuity, immanence with transcendence, experience with faith, and, at the end of his wanderings, the fragmentation he found with the totality for which he longed. For him, there would be no harmonious contemplation of "the sun and the other stars" (*il sole e l'altre stelle*).

From Dante and Petrarch, Camões developed the notion of love as the intelligible form of the unknown. But whereas his literary masters saw love as a means of ascent towards the unity of a divine spiritual order hidden behind the material world, he sought to find a spiritual unity in the multiplicity of the human experience of love. In the process, he articulated the symbol of the beloved angel-woman, the *donna angelicata*, with the manifold expression of her bodily reality, demystifying the poetically obligatory one and only love of a Beatrice or a Laura by emphasizing the biographical truth of the various flames in which he "variously burned." And, in affirming that the different forms in which love expressed itself are not "errors" or "faults" but "pure truths" that different readers can and should understand according to their own experience, he is also explicitly bringing these different perceptions into the semantic space of the poetic discourse: "*E sabeí que, segundo o amor tiverdes, / tereis o entendimento de meus versos.*" ("And know that according to the love that you experience, / you will have the understanding of my verse"). This relativistic assertion of the value of experience as a criterion for aesthetic and moral judgement derives from the change in his understanding of love, which is no longer seen as the prescient guide to a preconceived divine order but as the blind guide to somewhere not yet deciphered and from where there is no possible return: "*Não canse o cego amor de me guiar / a parte donde não saiba tornar-me.*"

The existential pilgrimage represented in Camões's poetry is less a metaphysical project than a search for something as indefinable and as revolu-

tionarily modern as the pursuit of happiness. In one of his sonnets he tells us that he had “contented himself with little” in order “to see what it was like to be happy.” In another, he claims that he had wanted to try his fortune by giving Fortune a chance to try him: “*e, por experimentar que dita tinha / quis que a Fortuna em mim se experimentasse.*” This trial of himself inevitably led him to commit “errors” that, as he tells us, were cruelly punished with “prisons,” “sorrows,” “misery” and “exile.” But what he had sought was love alone. And yet the very love that served to guide him—love’s blindness proved to be his own—reveals itself to be a savage deity who is not content with the symbolic sacrifice of “lambs” or “calves” but demands the sacrifice of those who serve it. Instead of the happiness he sought “only to see what it was like to be happy,” he found the labyrinthine real world of “unreason,” “blind death,” “doubtful chance,” and “unjust fortune.” The driving force of his apprenticeship had been the urge to “lose fear.” But in one of the most terrible lines in his poetry he declares that he has lost what losing fear had taught him: “*Já perdi o que perder o medo me ensinou.*” Even more terrible is the realisation that he records in another sonnet: “*Errei todo o discurso de meus anos.*” This extraordinary line, in which “*errei*” means both “I erred” and “I wandered about” and “*discurso*” means both “discourse or language” and “progress or process,” gives the full measure of the supreme boldness of his attempt to transform experience into meaning. Camões’s exile was far more than a meta-physical exile or a factual exile in India, it was an exile from himself. All he had was language—poetry—a discourse as inconclusive as life itself.

This perception leads him to state, in what may be his most nihilistic sonnet (“*Correm turvas as águas deste rio*”), that the world seems to be no more than God’s heedlessness and life no more than what it seems:

Tem o tempo sua ordem já sabida
O mundo não. Mas anda tão confuso
que parece que dele Deus se esquece.

Casos, opiniões, natura e uso
fazem que nos pareça desta vida
que não há nela mais que o que parece.

The theme of the world’s meaninglessness is explored in a thematically related sonnet that begins by contrasting the positive values of “Truth, Love,

Reason and Merit" with the opposing forces of "Fortune, Accident, Time and Chance" that seem to rule the world. It is a world of "effects" whose "causes" are unintelligible and where "human understanding" cannot grasp "what lies beyond life and death." Evidence derived from experience ("it is better to have seen many things") is thus preferable to the "lofty reasons" of supposedly "learned men." For, he tells us, "there are things that happen and are not believed and things that are believed but do not happen." But the chiasmus encapsulating this sober attitude of rational doubt is followed by the abrupt and logically unprepared for affirmation of the sonnet's last line: "*Mas o mil-hor de tudo é crer em Cristo.*" Could this line be simply an orthodox profession of Christian faith, as most conventional critics have affirmed? A sudden mystic revelation? Perhaps not. At most, perhaps, it is the expression of a desire for faith. In the sequence of a poem organized as a rigorous logical discussion of opposed concepts, however, this leap into the dark seems a *non sequitur*, an absurdity comparable to the absurdity of human existence.

The chronological order of Camões's lyric poems has never been established. And while it is almost a truism that a poet's spiritual biography is in his work, the fact is that Camões did not organize his work for posterity as Dante and Petrarch had done. Nevertheless, the general course of human destinies makes it possible to organize the poems into three broad groups corresponding to a gradual, but not necessarily linear change from confidence to doubt and from doubt to despair. Camões's early biographers and commentators give us a glimpse of this existential course. Pedro de Mariz says that he was "a great spender, liberal and magnificent" and that "his worldly goods lasted only until he found occasion to spend them as he pleased." Manuel Severim de Faria describes him as "easy in conversation, lively and witty [...]" but adds that "as he grew older he tended to become somewhat melancholy." And Diogo do Couto, who helped him to return to Portugal when he found him living in dire poverty after having quarrelled with the Governor who had been his protector, characterized him as "a man of terrible nature."

It is generally accepted among more recent commentators—particularly since the pioneering studies of Jorge de Sena—that the complexities of Camões's poetry reflect a dialectical mode of thought. This is undoubtedly true, above all in what he must have written before his "terrible nature" became dominant. But the Camonian dialectic does not always proceed in an obvious, and still less in a conventional way. Simplifying the concept without distorting it, it can be said that the dialectical process always seeks to recon-

cile antinomies, whether by asserting the supremacy of one of the two opposed terms—as in Petrarch's *Trionfi*, for example, where spiritual love triumphs over carnal love—or, as in later Hegelian dialectics, by proposing a synthesis in which the opposites can be reconciled. In any event, the dialectical reasoning process always leads to a clear conclusion. Hence its usefulness for mystic speculation and revolutionary prophesying: it serves equally to justify the paradoxical manifestation of God's hidden purposes and to project the contradictions of history into an idealized future. But in the dialectical thinking characteristic of Camões, opposites frequently remain opposed and are accepted as such. In other words, they are regarded not in terms of conflict but of co-existence and complementarity.

A significant example can be found in one of Camões's most beautiful and complex poems—*Canção VII* (“*Manda-me amor que cante docemente*”)—in which he takes up the traditional opposition between “appetite” and “reason” that other poets (notably Dante in his *Vita Nova*) had already explored. The obligatory conclusion was the triumph of reason over appetite. But Camões approaches this opposition from another angle, making it part of an existential process in which reminiscence is replaced by memory (or the preconceived idea by lived experience) and, with a characteristic shift in emphasis, reaches a different conclusion: the conflict could only be resolved by the reciprocal transformation of appetite into reason and reason into appetite. This would make it possible to achieve the desired “mild peace” (“*mansa paz*”) through the co-existence of “each one with its opposite in a single subject” (“*cada um com seu contrário num sujeito*”).

The implications of this different way of reconciling the perennial conflict between spirit and matter—between divine love and human sexuality—are not limited to the typically Camonian celebration of eroticism as a vehicle for knowledge. Underlying this celebration is a whole new attitude, asserting the value of antithetical complementarities as a desirable and positive expression of true human nature. In Camões the object of love is also understood as the subject of a separate individual identity and eroticism is affirmed as a relationship between differentiated others, “each one with its opposite in a single subject.”

Few poets, either before or after Camões, have celebrated feminine sexuality as much as he did. For him, woman is the other desired in her otherness and not an imagined extension of a lover who consubstantiates himself with his beloved. This attitude radically subverts the topics of the so-called

Platonic love prevalent in his time and endlessly explored in the poetry directly or indirectly associated with Petrarchism. Thus, for example, in a sonnet as famous as it is generally misunderstood, Camões takes up the basic neo-Platonic concept of lovers fusing to become one: “*Transforma-se o amador na cousa amada / por virtude do muito imaginar*” (“The lover transforms himself into the beloved / by virtue of much imagining”). But the conclusion he reaches is the exact opposite: however much the lover may imagine, he does not transform himself into the beloved and to claim that this is so is a misplaced fallacy.

It is this same fallacy that Camões mocks in two poems written in the feminine voice, with a lightness of tone that in no way diminishes their conceptual seriousness, in which the women complain about the false lovers who prefer the idea to the reality, the abstraction of a contemplative love to the tangible sexuality they are offering and openly desire. In one of these poems—“*Coifa de beirame*” (“Calico head-dress”)—the woman castigates the “foolishness” of the “false lover” who is more in love with the clothes that adorn her than with the body she would willingly uncover if he really wanted her. In the other—“*Falso cavaleiro ingrato*” (“False ungrateful knight”)—the woman accuses the deceiving lover of being the one who “kills” her when he complains that she is “killing” him with unconsummated love, thus characterizing the masculine stereotype of courtly love as a form of hypocrisy, cruelty and lack of love.

Camões thus demonstrates that the poetics of neo-Platonism provides a language code that can be used to signify the opposite of what it supposedly signifies. Correspondingly, in one of his most beautiful and subtle sonnets—“*Um mover de olhos brando e piedoso*” (“A mild and merciful movement of the eyes”)—he uses the language of neo-Platonism to celebrate a “Circe” whose enchantments have the opposite effect to those of Homer’s Circe. The sonnet is organized as a catalogue of virtues or poetic blazon in which the attitudes, gestures and characteristics described establish the low social, and implicitly ethnic, status of the woman depicted: “*um riso [...] quase forçado*” (“an almost forced smile”); “*um doce e humilde gesto de qualquer alegria duvidoso*” (“a sweet and humble gesture doubtful of some joy”); “*um medo sem ter culpa*” (“a fear that knows no guilt”); “*um longo e obediente sofrimento*” (“a long and obedient suffering”); and even “*um manifesto indicio de alma*” (“a manifest indication of a soul”), suggesting that there is a need to affirm that the woman also has a soul. At the same time Camões includes in the psy-

chological and social characterization of his “Circe” all the qualities associated with the *donna angelicata*—gentleness, gravity, modesty, goodness, serenity—in order to conclude that the “heavenly beauty” (“*celeste formusura*”) of this enchantress is neither the cause nor the result of low love understood in neo-Platonic terms but a “magic poison” capable of uplifting his mind rather than degrading it.

If, as the overall effect of the sonnet so subtly suggests, the woman it describes is, in fact, of non-European race, she would certainly not be the only such instance in Camões’s poetry. She may well have been the Chinese mistress who, according to Diogo do Couto, was with the poet when he was shipwrecked near the Mekong Delta and was probably drowned in the disaster: the “Dinamene” named in two elegiac sonnets and the “nymph” whose death at sea is implicitly evoked in two others. Or she may have been the black mistress to whom he dedicates the “Lament for a slave called Barbara” (“*Aquela cativa que me tem cativo*”) whose revitalizing serenity, shy smile and sweetness are characterized in terms very similar to those he uses to describe his “heavenly” Circe. Sexual use of native women was one of the perks of empire and Camões, the imperial soldier, must undoubtedly have used and abused the privilege. What is unusual is the way in which his lament for Barbara dignifies the racial status of his dark mistress, who “may well seem strange but certainly not barbarous.” So far as I know, he was the first poet of the European Renaissance who celebrated the physical and spiritual beauty of a black woman not as an exotic import or a literary gloss of the “black but comely” lover of the Song of Solomon, but as an appreciative recognition of difference.

The names Camões gave to his non-European mistresses also reveal an intention to dignify difference. “Dinamene” comes from the noble classical tradition: it is a pastoral cryptonym which Camões uses in two of his eclogues and which Garcilaso de la Vega had also used to designate a Tagus nymph. The coincidence—and bitter irony—would not have escaped Camões when he used the name to designate the drowned oriental “nymph” of his exile, who “suffered an early death in the sea’s waves.” As for the name “Barbara,” this is either another poetic cryptonym or, more probably, the name given to the captive by her captors, since it is hardly likely to have been the proper name of a black slave. Inverting this form of identity-usurpation by using the name in a poem celebrating the blackness of the beloved as though it were indeed a real name, Camões transforms the onomatopoeic non-word “Barbara” (the Greek term used to mimic the sub-human non-intelligibility

of languages spoken by other peoples) into the transposed affirmation of the independent identity of his "strange but certainly not barbarous" servant-mistress. Thus, by using the language of courtly love to celebrate his Barbara, Camões is also indicating that the underlying codes of this language could no longer be considered normative: the available language would, however, be used to express new meanings. Oddly—indeed perversely—modern commentators have shown a persistent reluctance to accept that the woman depicted in this poem could, in fact, have been black. It is undeniable, however, that there were many African slaves in Goa, including women.

It is interesting to note that the Petrarchan lyrical tradition was used to serve less conventional purposes in the "Bohemian" Lisbon where Camões spent most of his youth. Poet of "high thought" and promiscuous frequenter of brothels, Camões had the gift of irony that enabled him to understand that things could be both what they were and their opposite. In a letter written from Goa he throws a surprising light on the erotic effects of the poetry of Petrarch or Boscán on the sexual practices of the Lisbon prostitutes or "fresh-water nymphs" as he calls them, whose irresistible "falsehoods" he contrasts with the prosaic sexuality of the local whores. "If you try to impress them with gallantries from Petrarch or Boscán," he writes, "they reply in a language as coarse as common vetch, which gags the understanding and pours cold water on the most burning ardour in the world."

In *Os Lusíadas*, as in the lyric poetry, Camões uses the language of literary tradition to convey a new understanding of the world derived from the perceived co-existence of apparent opposites. The epic is organized around a number of interlinked conceptual pairings: arms and letters, gods and men, Venus and Bacchus, celebration and regret, past and present, epic and pastoral. Its literary references include not only Virgil and Homer but Ovid and Theocritus, not to mention Dante and Petrarch. I shall briefly indicate two or three conceptual and literary links before dealing at greater length with a number of others in order to exemplify Camões's creative process in *Os Lusíadas*.

In the *Aeneid*, Virgil celebrates the past in order to glorify the present; Camões uses the model of the *Aeneid* in order to criticize the present by celebrating the past. The literary traditions of epic and pastoral represent conceptually opposed viewpoints, the former glorifying voyages, wars and conquests, the latter lamenting these as a symptom of degeneration and decadence, a fall from the prelapsarian Gold Age to the corrupt Iron Age. Camões brings together the two opposed viewpoints in a passage in which

the epic framework is used to highlight the theme of pastoral regret. At the crucial epic moment when the ships are about to sail from the quay of Restelo, an old man, “made wise by experience,” makes an explicitly pastoral condemnation of the epic enterprise that the poem is celebrating. But the speech of the “old man of Restelo” also incorporates in its criticism the epic celebration of a “just war,” which can bring the nation as many material benefits as those to be found in the East. Correspondingly, the consecration of the heroes of the epic adventure takes place in the peaceful pastoral utopia of the Island of Love. Conceptually, this suggests that the paradoxical purpose of the feats celebrated in this epic is the achievement of pastoral peace and the restoration of the harmony of the Golden Age through the use of the arms of the Iron Age. From a comparative literary viewpoint, this would link the Virgil of *Eclogue IV*, the so-called “prophetic eclogue,” to the Virgil of the *Aeneid* as a literary source of *Os Lusíadas*.

I shall give only one more example of the convergence of opposed conceptual and literary viewpoints. Exactly in the middle of the poem—and of the voyage—the mariners encounter Adamastor, the giant who had been transformed into the rocky African promontory that guards the passage from the known to the unknown world, from the West to the East. His metamorphosis is an implicit link with Ovid; his physical characterization and the threat he represents has something of Homer’s Polyphemus; and, in the punishment he suffers by being eternally imprisoned in the sea—where he is constantly encircled by the nymph he had wanted to possess through force—the Amorous Giant could be a figure from Dante’s *Inferno*.

These literary and conceptual links provide a framework for the poem’s magnificent architecture. *Os Lusíadas* is, above all, I think, a poem about language—about writing—and, consequently, also about its reception. This is what Camões immediately indicates in the dedication to Dom Sebastião when, in a crucial but generally overlooked passage, he exhorts the young king to renew the “memory” and “great feats” of the nation’s ancestral heroes by making the verses of the poem his own, since they will show him the great history of which he is a part and which he must continue:

Mas enquanto este tempo passa lento
de regerdes os povos que o desejam,
dai vós favor ao novo atrevimento
para que estes meus versos vossos sejam.

*But while the time of your reign passes slowly
 Matching your people's dearest wish
 Look kindly on this bold new enterprise
 So that these my verses may become your own.*
 (I.18)

The "bold new enterprise" is the poem itself, which is thus invested with the quality of that other "*atrevimento*" (the word used by both Bacchus and Adamastor) represented by the epic adventure it celebrates. Only in "the angry sea" of literary representation can chronological time be transformed into its historical meaning, making it possible not only for the present to witness and assume the past but for the past to foresee and invoke a future that would give it continuity:

E vereis ir cortando o salso argento
 os vossas argonautas, por que vejam
 que são vistos de vós no mar irado
 e costumai-vos já a ser invocado.

*And you will see, cutting the salt sea
 Your own Argonauts, so that they in turn
 May see that they are seen by you
 And you become accustomed to being invoked.*
 (I.18)

In the preceding stanzas of the poem Camões had affirmed the superiority of his epic, which was based on historic truth and not, as in epics inspired by "foreign muses," on mythic falsehoods. Nonetheless, the poem soon includes mythical, fantastic, prophetic and oneiric elements, a fabulous universe represented in the transposition of the acts of men to the machinations of pagan deities who preside over their destinies and give them exemplary meaning. On the level of the literary representation of history, Camões could do this without any contradiction since these deities were empty shells of outworn beliefs that had been transformed into poetic "names" for factual truths. In other words, they had become metaphors of history, with which Camões confronts Dom Sebastião and, through him as head of the kingdom, his contemporaries. This is why once the gods have fulfilled their metaphorical function, Camões can

make them deny their manifest reality: “*Só para fazer versos deleitosos / servimos; e se mais o trato humano / nos pode dar, é só que o nome nosso / nestas estrelas pôs o engenho vosso.*” (“We serve only to make delightful verses / and if ought else can be given us by humans / ‘tis only because our names have led your ingenuity to the stars”). What the poet is saying is not only that the names of pagan gods were used to name the stars, as has usually been understood. He says far more than this: the names that had served him in the making of the “delightful verses” of his own poem are the fictitious vehicles (what we would now call “signifiers”) that enabled him to direct human ingenuity towards the understanding of the unexplained processes of the real universe. In the same stanza, the gods who have served as metaphors for poetic meaning affirm that they will give way to the “true God.” But two stanzas earlier, in a line that has a more radical equivalent in the sonnet in which Christ represents the collapse of reason, the poet had declared: “*Mas o que é Deus ninguém o entende / que a tanto o engenho humano não se estende*” (“But what God is, no one can understand / for human ingenuity cannot reach so far” [X.80]). By placing “divine wisdom” which has “no beginning and no end” outside the finite world in which human understanding operates, Camões would not be deviating too far from the accepted philosophical concepts of the orthodox Christianity of his time. But he uses these concepts to place God outside the semantic space of a poetic discourse that aims to give a non-theological meaning to the intelligible world and to human destinies, which have a beginning and an end. It is this meaning that the poetic discourse manages to confer on transitory human existence.

Correspondingly, in one of his recurrent personal interventions in the poem Camões makes it clear that “our Gama” himself must also be understood as a literary character. The passage in question follows Vasco da Gama’s speech to the king of Melinde and immediately serves to characterize that speech as a dramatic expression of the author’s own voice. But it also includes a more radical suggestion: Camões is the *author* of Vasco da Gama: it is as though Gama and, by extension, the other historical characters of *Os Lusíadas* had no existence other than the literary existence they are given by the poetic text. Fabulous gods and historical heroes are thus established as signifiers of a poetic text that relates ultimately to the author and defines itself as self-referential. But if this is so, Camões is also suggesting that there is no history as such; there is only the meaning that can be given to history. And this meaning, as he had already indicated in his dedication to Dom Sebastião, depends on the reception of the text.

The characterization of Vasco da Gama as a literary signifier of the nation's history occurs at the end of a passage in the poem in which Camões begins by celebrating Letters as equal to Arms, in the terms of the old topic of the classical tradition. But he gradually radicalizes the debate in favour of Letters and the consequent need for proper understanding in the reception of a literary text: "For those who know nothing about art cannot value it." And he concludes unequivocally that "without Virgils and Homers there cannot be a pious Aeneas or fierce Achilles." He subliminally suggests the reason by qualifying the names of the heroes with the epithets given them by Virgil and Homer, attributes that subsequently came to characterize their supposed historical truth. The logical conclusion is that without an understanding of the poem there would be no "captain," no leader of the "signal heroes." Without Camões there would be no Vasco da Gama:

Às musas agradeça o nosso Gama
o muito amor da Pátria, que as obriga
a dar aos seus, na lira, nome e fama
de toda a ilustre e bélica fadiga;
que ele, nem quem na estirpe seu se chama,
Caliope não tem por tão amiga
nem as filhas do Tejo, que deixassem
as telas de ouro fino e que o cantassem.

*Let Gama be grateful to the muses
That they love his country as they do,
Which leads them to honour their own in poetry
Giving them name and fame for their exploits of war.
For neither he nor any other of his lineage
Can claim Caliope as their friend
Nor expect the daughters of Tagus to leave
Their cloths of gold and sing of him.
(V.99)*

Gama is a hero without Muses of his own, unable himself to give meaning to his acts. This assertion also relates to what Camões states in his dedication to Dom Sebastião when he transposes the heroic voyage of the past to the voyage of heroic uncertainties that is the poem itself, the poetic discourse

that gives meaning to the historical voyage. And the progress of the poet's voyage on the "angry sea" of poetry—the "bold new enterprise" that bridges the heroic past and the desired future—is registered as a counterpoint to the voyage celebrated in the poem until, simultaneously accentuating its self-referential character and reiterating the need for its proper reception or understanding, it ends by fusing literary and historical meaning into an inseparable whole. Having characterized Vasco da Gama as one of his poetic signifiers, Camões intervenes in the complementary speech of Gama's brother—Paulo da Gama, a hero of the same lineage—to declare that the poem he is writing in celebration of the factual voyage on which the brothers sailed is carrying the poet himself "on the high seas," with a wind "so contrary" that he fears his "fragile vessel will soon be wrecked" (VII.78).

The metaphorical value of this reiterated semantic correspondence between the historic voyage and its representation in the sea of language acquires a broader connotation of equivalent biographical fact in the reference Camões makes to the changes he himself encountered when Fortune made him wander the world: "Now at sea, now experiencing / the inhuman dangers of war / [...] with a sword in one hand and in the other a pen" (VII.79). The equivalence between his experience of Arms and the feats of the heroes he celebrates in the poem is evident; but to these shared experiences Camões adds his own feats of Letters: the ability he has, but that the others do not share, to give meaning to these feats in the poem in which he includes himself. Indeed, the "shipwreck" of his poem would affect the perception of history.

It is, in fact, the *literary* perception of history that is broached in *Os Lusíadas* in an interlinking of semantic registers centred on the ambiguous relations of Vasco da Gama with the gods and of the gods with one another, in other words, on the poem's articulation of apparent contradictions through the convergence of historical signifiers (Gama and the other human characters) and mythical signifiers (the pagan gods).

On a first reading, Venus and Bacchus are irreconcilable opposites. Venus is the ally of the Portuguese, Bacchus their enemy. Venus offers the path to sublime love (the *caritas patriae* of civic humanism), Bacchus is the manifestation of low love. Venus represents the noble purpose of the epic adventure, Bacchus its degradation. Venus could, therefore, also be the representation of redemptive Christianity, Bacchus—Lord of India—the representation of the infidels awaiting redemption and specifically of the rivals of the Portuguese

in India, namely Islam. A straightforward identification of Bacchus with the East is, however, somewhat complicated by the insistent characterization of him as the mythical ancestor of the Portuguese through Lusus. (Incidentally, this gives a curious ambiguity to the poem's never satisfactorily explained title, *Os Lusíadas*). It is true that Bacchus, as pre-Christian father of the Portuguese (Camões calls him "Father Bacchus" on his first appearance in the poem) can also be understood as the internalised enemy of a nation turned against itself, which deserves Cupid's crusade against "those who love things that were given to us not to be loved but to be used." Even then, however, a basic question arises from the polarization in the poem between Venus and Bacchus. Why Bacchus? Why Venus and Bacchus as opposites? Indeed, in the mythology from which these deities are taken, which Camões knew so well, Venus and Bacchus (or Dionysus) represent parallel or even complementary forces and are never opposed as such, even though they manifest themselves in different ways. But is this not also applicable to their roles in *Os Lusíadas*? This reading was suggested by Fernando Gil in a book we wrote together on the Portuguese Renaissance, *Viagens do Olhar*, where our different viewpoints produced not only basic agreements but also some occasional (and didactically salutary) disagreements. I can only agree, however, with his affirmation that in *Os Lusíadas* the values of Venus and Bacchus are inextricably linked. "The Island of Venus," he writes, "is openly and exclusively Dionysiac." And he adds: "Venus, the enemy of Bacchus, rewards the mariners with the values of Bacchus." This insight confirms that Camões is once more transforming an apparent dialectical opposition into the co-existence of apparent antinomies.

As for the historical signifiers of the poetic text (Gama and the other mariners) we have already seen how Camões places God outside the finite world of human understanding. With impeccable poetic logic and considerable ideological boldness, when Gama, the herald of Christianity, is threatened or cannot understand what is happening and invokes the protection of the "Divine Guardian," it is the pagan Venus, also ambiguously referred to in the poem as "the guardian goddess" (I.102) who comes to his aid and saves him. Venus would, therefore, according to most commentators, be a poetic representation of the Virgin Mary. But the goddess who responds to Gama's prayers has little of the Christian and is hardly virginal in the methods she uses to come to his aid. For example, she sends her "amorous nymphs" to transform the war-like fury of the winds into a peaceful sexual frenzy by offering them their naked and receptive bodies. And she herself goes to seduce her father, Jupiter, who, mad with lust, promises her anything she

wants for her favoured Portuguese. Venus's intercession with her father establishes a deliberate correspondence with the *Aeneid* (I.227-296) but the pagan Virgil does not even suggest what Camões makes explicit.

It is the same divinely sexual Venus who engineers the carnal consecration of the spiritual immortality of Gama and the other Christian Portuguese heroes in the Island of Love. This is yet again a poetic metaphor, a linguistic sortilege: the "angelic painted island" into which Venus metamorphoses herself is a painting made of words, an imaginary place that only exists by being found and must therefore always be found anew. But through this metaphor Camões redirects the historic purpose of the voyage—to find the India that existed—into a broader moral imperative: to discover human love, both in the spirit and in the flesh, as the supreme purpose of any quest. In other words, Venus's Island corresponds to Dante's vision of "the sun and the other stars"; but the universal harmony represented in it is the image of a happiness to be enjoyed on this earth. This was not exactly the spirit presiding over either imperial Christian militancy or the equivalent and no less imperial Islamic militancy of Camões's time.

Through a poetic discourse based on antinomies Camões subtly—subversively—managed to relativize the religious conflict inherent in the Christian meaning of his poem. And in this work written under the nefarious shadow of the Inquisition (but in which, significantly, there is not a single negative reference to the Judaism that so preoccupied the Inquisitors), he not only broadened the concept of Christianity prevalent in his time but also opened a chink for other viewpoints derived from different ways of understanding the world. This was "the bold new enterprise" that Camões was proposing to Dom Sebastião. The poem's reception would not only determine the continuity of the heroic past in the future but the justification of a poetic discourse capable of making life's wanderings meaningful.

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The Expression of Poetry and the Impasses of Empire

Fernando Gil

Abstract. In *The Lusiads* the expression of poetry—the poetry of Voyage—is opposed to the expression of Empire. This opposition is semantical as well as formal: themes and morpho-syntactical structures are intertwined. Both are analysed in detail. In fact, the relation of Voyage to Empire is complex, as each one “acts” upon the other, with different degrees of success.

Some years ago I published a study on *The Lusiads*, which is the basis of this presentation.¹ I was never a follower of my late colleague, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and I am not very much interested, I must confess, in the sociology of things not social. Thus, I never thought that I might find myself within the *champ*, as Bourdieu calls it, of *The Lusiads*’ interpretations. According to Bourdieu, each intellectual production has its place—inescapably—in a set (the “field”) of power relations and vested interests. However, another colleague, Professor Sanjay Subramanyan, in an article published this year in a Mexican magazine, suggests that my reading resorts to a definite political position: a sort of left-wingish revisionism—he does not use these words—insofar as I pretend that, in a certain way, Camões acknowledges the failure of the Portuguese imperial project.² In the poem, political failure amounts to *failure in expression*. We read *The Lusiads* with fresh delight, as if it had been written today. But to make one’s way through it may also be excruciating. In this epic, imperial ideology and Catholicism result in bad poetry; however, lyricism and paganism result in the beautiful poetry of discovery as well. (Things are more complicated than this straight opposition, as we shall see.)³

Professor Subramanyan's point of view is anti-colonialist. So far so good. But he seems to think that his is the sole respectable view. The idea that he might be outstripped by Camões himself and by Portuguese revisionists makes him feel uncomfortable. More so, if the revision is "leftist." The innuendo is perhaps that revisionism is a twisted way, in the post-colonial era, of still pretending to some kind of Portuguese "symbolic" supremacy. That being said, Subramanyan is in some sense right. An interpretation such as mine is indeed *post-imperial*. To throw into relief Camões's nostalgia and political awareness is much easier after the end of empires—let me congratulate Professor Victor Mendes for the title he chose for our conference. I thank him too, as well as Professor João Ricardo Figueiredo, for their kind invitation.

I shall oppose the expression of poetry—the poetry of Voyage—and the expression of Empire. Without trying to explain the meaning of this word, "expression," let me just say that I consider expression as having two components: the *need for expression* (explanation of expression cannot avoid being circular); we may call this need "feeling"—and the *need for form*. The need for expression has semantic content, the need for form does not, though form may have intrinsic semantic import. Of course I am not claiming any pre-eminence of semantics over form. We shall not say that a feeling so-and-so looks for its formal counterpart or for its "adequate" form. Need for expression runs together with need for form. To quote Schoenberg, from whom I borrowed the formula *need for expression*, form is immanent to feeling, and this is so from the very inception of the creative process. Themes and morpho-syntactical structures are intertwined; themes are themselves facts of expression. Felicitous expression derives from the co-implication and the co-adaptation of semantics and form.

Voyage and Foundation

The Lusiads begins with a dedication. Camões, author of the poem, addresses himself to the young King, Sebastião. Then the action begins, on Mount Olympus and along the coast of Mozambique. Camões, the narrator, relates the voyage between Mozambique and Malindi. Vasco da Gama, the protagonist, is traveling to the northeast. His aim is to attain India. In Malindi, Vasco recounts to the Sultan the history of Portugal's two dynasties as well as the trip between Lisbon and Mozambique.

Then, the expedition proceeds towards India. Camões is again the narrator. In India, Vasco's brother, Paulo, gives the Catual, an Indian official

(VII.44), another, abridged version of Portugal's history. It is Camões who relates the incidents of Gama's sojourn in India and his return to Lisbon. The trip is interrupted by a halt at an imaginary island, the Island of Love, where a Nymph and Tethys, one of Neptune's wives, predict the conquest of India subsequent to Gama's voyage, and the future discoveries of the Portuguese. (The reader was aware that those events predicted by the Nymphs had already happened, during the seventy years between the discovery of India and *The Lusiads*.) The fleet returns then to Portugal (in the time of one octave), and Camões concludes the poem, addressing himself again to the King.

We see that several Camões co-exist: the narrator of the voyage and the author of the poem, as well as Camões the poet and the man. Each one has different *problems of expression* to solve. What do *The Lusiads* relate? The first three octaves explain that the poem is going to recount a sea odyssey (*by oceans where none had ventured*, I.1.3): the discovery of India by Vasco da Gama in 1498. His voyage leads to the building (1.7) of a *new Kingdom* (1.8).⁴ Although it is mentioned almost cursorily, the new kingdom is one of the two axes of the poem. The other is Gama's voyage. *The Lusiads* tell the story of a *new foundation*, as the outcome of a *voyage*. I shall use these two designations, Foundation and Voyage, as abbreviations of Camões's basic inspirations.

This is not all. Camões intends, *likewise*, (2.1) to *sing* (I.3.5) those *kings of glorious memory* (2.1) who brought *ruin on the degenerate / Lands of Africa and Asia* (2.4). And, too, some men *whose immortal deeds / Have conquered death's oblivion* (2.5-6), that is, *heroes*. All of them—sailors, warriors—are Portuguese (3.5). Through their *navigations* (3.2), through the *victories* (3.4) of kings and heroes, *The Lusiads* wishes to celebrate the superlative *value* of the whole Lusitanian nation: *because another, higher value is rising* (3.8). This applies not only to present discoveries but also to the whole of Portuguese history, since the 12th century. Finally, the celebration of Portuguese merit has worldwide relevance: *These words will go wherever there are men* (2.7). Foundation in general and this particular voyage (I.3) are both *inaugural*: and not only this voyage, for Gama's is the prototype of all discoveries to come, as announced on the Island of Love.

The sequence of events shows that the memory of Portuguese kings and heroes (the past history of Portugal) is at the same level of meaning, if you allow me this expression, of the New Kingdom's, of which India is the siege. What is at stake is a re-foundation that reiterates other, previous foundations and re-foundations. The empire of India fulfills the project of João I, who was

the first king to set foot / Beyond his native soil (IV.48.5-6). This was also the project of his *supremely gifted progeny* (50.8). João *re-founded* the kingdom *founded* by Afonso Henriques—which had already been the object of several *proto-foundations*. These were the deeds of heroes, human (Viriatius and Sertorius), epic (Ulysses) and mythic (Lusus, son of Bacchus...). Everything related to this Portugal yet to be born is *old legend—perhaps untrue. / From antiquity nothing is certain* (III.29.2). But it is certain that Portugal must exist.

Of course, Vasco and Paulo da Gama, who in Malindi and India display Portugal's foundations and re-foundation, know all about the kingdom's history, from those mythical origins to the voyage on which they have embarked. Foundation has created the unambiguous and continuous *identity of the famous Portuguese* (I.3.5). That which was founded is the identity of a *community*. Portugal will remain forever identical to itself, reconquering itself whenever its identity is endangered. Portugal's identity is *necessary*, as it proceeds from God's decree. Consubstantiated in a miracle, Christ assisted to the kingdom's birth (III.45-46, the miracle of Ourique).

Since its inception Portuguese history unfolds the internal *necessity* of a providential *mission*, deviations and temporary feebleness notwithstanding. João I quits Portugal, "*so Africa / Should learn in battle how much less sufficed / The power of Islam than the power of Christ*" (IV.48). *Christianity* embodied in Portugal, will prove to be the destiny of the world. Foundation shall be renewed and extended into the future, thanks to a continuous process. The retrospective speeches of Vasco and Paulo will be completed by the "prophecies" of the Nymph, dwelling upon the conquest of India, and of Tethys, who spells out the "future" discoveries of the Portuguese, between 1498 and 1570. Camões delegates to the Gamas and to the Nymphs the account of Portugal's history. He keeps to himself the role of narrator of the Voyage, with the exceptions I mentioned.

Those speeches are delivered during, and from within, the expedition—the voyage draws history to itself. Voyage values are opposed to the Foundation's. It is not an abstract community that sails to India, but *these* seafarers, *hic et nunc, prepa<ring> our souls to meet death / Which is always in a sailor's horizon* (IV.86). Death and *hazards and assaults* (I.1), *great and grave dangers, the vicissitudes of life's journey*, without the aid of any kind of trust (I.105). Sailors yield their flesh to *the unknown dangers of the world / to shipwreck, to fishes, to the abyss* (X.147). The voyage exposes oneself to novelty, i.e. to *difference* (instead of identity). The *possible* and the *contingent* (instead of

necessity) are its modalities. History *fulfills* a mission, voyage *opens* to the unknown. These values will be joined by others, or shall multiply themselves in others: experience, desire, adventure, love, poetry itself.

Such oppositions have a religious expression. *Catholicism* is *univocal*, *mythology* is *plural*. Mythology guides the Voyage while the invisible hand of God supports foundations and re-foundations. However, the status of mythology and paganism in *The Lusiads* is far from simple: Catholicism has its representatives on Olympus, and one pagan god, Bacchus, remains Gama's unrepentant enemy. In addition, according to Tethys, in a famous stanza, pagan gods should, after all, prove to be a mere illusion or, rather, a poetical device (X.82).

These ambiguities derive from constraints related to expression. The expression of poetry conflicts with the expression of ideology and politics. In fact, Camões aims at rendering politics poetic, through the blends we shall encounter. But it must be kept in mind that the Christian God does not take part in the seafaring, and that Vasco's and Paulo's speeches never mention pagan gods. It is the Christian Divinity who commands Portugal's historical fate. Christ is the only god who manifests himself through signs and miracles; it is in His name that Idolaters and Moors are defeated.

Nevertheless, Portugal's future is forecasted by the Nymph and by Tethys, both sea deities. This is the case, since, with the discovery of India, the future is located and decided overseas and no longer in Europe.

Semantic and formal expression

Having in mind the components of expression, how do Voyage and Foundation exhibit the *need for expression*, and how do they relate to *form*? Another subject of expression must be considered, *Camões the Author* (and *Camões the Poet* too). Besides his initial and final addresses to the King, in Canto Seven Camões intervenes twice, in the first person. In a well-known verse he presents himself as holding *pen in one hand, a sword in the other* (VII.79). (Indeed—however, the marriage of lyricism and empire appears to be hazardous. It is not easy to conciliate Voyage's values to the Foundation's). Likewise, from the fourth strophe of *The Lusiads* Camões declares that his style should be *grandiloquent and fluent*. However, fluency pertains to lyricism, not to the turgidity of Camões's epic.

Both Voyage and Catholic Imperial ideology search expression. Their respective sets of values, and the conciliation of both, are the primary *semantic* content of *The Lusiads*. As regards *form*, two layers need to be distin-

guished. The first is morpho-syntactic, the second narrative. Both have semantic import, though different from what I call semantic content ("values"). We shall now see that Voyage and Foundation differ in their forms too.

The consistency of these so different kinds of oppositions is, I think, quite remarkable by itself. *The Lusíads express their combined effect*. But fluency—which voyage is by definition—seems to be contrary to imperial grandeur, in every respect.

I leave lexicon aside; obviously, the language of Voyage differs from that of Foundation. As for morpho-syntactics, I restrict myself to the *verbal grammar*: persons, tenses, moods and aspects. Conquest and the execution of a divine mission, as well as adventure and love, express themselves through actions, and verbs express actions. Thus, we have: as regards Voyage, the first person, the present, the indicative and the imperfect (mainly in the progressive form, the action that has begun and is not yet finished); as regards Foundation, the third person, the preterite and the future, the past participle, and the perfect (the action that is completely finished).

In what concerns the narrative structures, Voyage is expressed through *scenes*, *tableaux*, and Foundation through the above-mentioned *speeches*. Scenes are natural narrative correlatives of the progressive, the indicative and the present. Similarly, historical speeches appear to be the natural correlative of the preterite, the past participle and the perfect aspect.

We can anticipate that the Voyage's set of forms (morphological as well as narrative) tend to be "poetic" and that this cannot be the case of Foundation. It is not an easy task to bring past deeds to life, heroic and necessary as they may be, and render them poetic. Except for the lyrical episodes scattered over their rhetoric, Vasco and Paulo are by and large pompous. No immediate empathy follows from the imperial dream—and we can affirm it without retrospective illusions. Remember the departure of the caravels from Lisbon, one of the most moving and most celebrated scenes of the poem: an old man shouts at the expedition and at King Manuel's pretensions—*pride of power, vanity of fame, the wealth of kingdoms and empire*—and he condemns *the disregard of life* (IV.95-96: "Long live Death!" in Professor White's translation...). *Life should always / be cherished*. Immediately before the Old Man of Restelo's oration, *mothers, wives and sisters / made fretful by their love* (89) had expressed their *anxiety and dismay*, in six marvelous octaves (88).

Reverting to the Author and entering *in medias res*, the problems of conciliation that Camões had to solve relate to each of the two axes that we have been

considering. They are the following: (1) How to express poetically the unpoetic nature of conquest? (2) How are love and wandering, and the poetry attached to both, liable to express Imperial values? (The Samorin accuses Gama of “living the life of a vagabond,” *mas vagabundo vás passando a vida*, [VIII. 61], Gama answers a little later [67]: he is not *undivago e da pátria desterrado*.)

Camões's solutions are different for each one of these questions. They derive from two operations that, taken together, should bring forth Conciliation: (1) *Induced effects of the verbal grammar of Voyage* (persons, tenses, aspects, moods) *on the verbal grammar of Foundation* breath life into past history. Here, the active factor is formal. However, such effects cannot but remain limited as they collide with the semantics of Foundation, whose values are unchanging and perennial. (2) Symmetrically, *the semantics of Foundation are supposed to permeate and give consistency* to the discontinuity and the contingency inherent to the expedition, and to discovery as such. Divine and historical necessity would reabsorb the hazards of experience. However, this transformation rests exclusively on lexical means, as we shall see. Thus, it cannot be effective. *Form is missing*, consistency ensues from sheer verbal violence. The co-adaptation of semantics and form is shallow; it amounts to no more than an *effet de surface*. (Fortunately, though, the form and the semantics of Voyage are left untouched.)

Camões misses the reconciliation he searches. The status of paganism, in particular the misadventures of Bacchus, the wandering half-god and nevertheless protector of the Moors' enemies of Portugal, summarizes *The Lusíads*' failure.

FORM

The discourse of Voyage: morpho-syntax, narration

(i) After the dedication to the King (*so / this epic may become your own*, [I.1]), the trip is introduced, in the imperfect. Aspectually, the imperfect is the progressive occurring in the past: *They were midway on the wide ocean... / The billowing wind was bowing gently ... the seas were showing themselves* (I.18). Similarly, the movement of the fleet is an action in progress: *the prows are / Cutting the sacred waters* (I.19).

Either past or present, the imperfect progressive is the aspect proper to the voyage. (Some rare exceptions have their own justification.) And the imperfect of Voyage acts on the discourse of Foundation: Portugal's past history unfolds in the progressive too, as if it were always still happening.⁵

(ii) A living present connected to the imperfect is the characteristic tense of *The Lusiads*. Making Gama's trip coincide with its description, Camões obtains that the action's time (1498) and the time of the narration (1572) overlap. The expedition is brought into the present as if it were evolving under King Sebastião's eyes, and the narration nourishes itself with the never-ending novelty of action. Such action—the travel—is the *narrative focus* of the poem. It is not an accident of history; it is rather history that comes on top of Gama's trip. Past pours into present in one precise moment, when, at the end of his relation to the Sultan, Vasco remarks: *At long last, to this safe anchorage, / Sweet solace and peace of mind / You provided. Now I lay down my task, / having answered everything I heard you ask* (V.85). Camões's poem is contemporary with the expedition and past and future history are contemporary with the poem and the expedition.

(iii) As we observed, the travel is told in the first person, by Camões, its natural narrator, and by Vasco, as an exception. (iv) Finally its mood is the indicative, things seen and historical facts are presented deictically.⁶ Together with the overlapping of narration and action, this contributes to suggest actuality, as if Camões himself had been a member of the expedition, bearing witness to Gama's deeds. And participation in the voyage reinforces *veracity*, as if the cumulative coherence of the first person, the progressive (preterite or actual), the indicative and the present established and declared the narration's truthfulness: it is the truth of self-evidence.

Narrative structures amplify this feeling of reality. The Voyage consists of a series of *tableaux vivants*: of the present, the past and the future; of people, of animals of many sorts, landscapes, storms, shipwreck. Of conversations and intrigues, among men and gods. Of fear and hope, joy and despair; of comic boastfulness, sexual fever, abuse, cruelty. Of grace, too.

Truth would be Camões's goal. His is not a mere *song of praise*. Truth is supposed to distinguish *The Lusiads* from its foreign counterparts. Neither Foundation accounts nor travel stories shall house *counterfeit / Exploits, fantasies such as muses / Elsewhere have dreamed or invented* (I.11). Truth possesses many facets: actuality of past and future history, presentification of actions and things, testimony. It does not refer only to Gama's seafaring. The sailors represent the whole Portuguese community, contingency is thereby legitimized: this trip embodies a mission. A continuous process of discovery and conquest must culminate in the Empire and in the political allegiance of the

Moor. The semantics of truth—Portuguese, Imperial truth—ascertains the meaning of Voyage, whose syntactic values would, in return, actualize the past and attract the future to the present. This magnificent dialectic is the target of *the author of The Lusíads*.

The discourse of Foundation: morpho-syntax and narrative structure

The syntax of Foundation is symmetrical to the Voyage's. Its natural devices should be the perfect (proper to accomplished actions), the preterite, the past principle and the irreality of the subjunctive mood (in speeches about the future), and the third person, which conveys the impersonality of dead events. However, as remarked, Portugal's history is re-enacted by the syntactic apparatus of Voyage.

As regards narration, the discourse of Foundation expresses itself through *four speeches*. All of them are eulogies praising the merits of Portugal. Whereas we are presented with the scenes of Voyage, we listen to the evocations and prognostications of two pairs of speakers, the Gamas and Tethys and the Nymph. Both proceed through the laborious, not to say verbose *re-activation* of times and events gone by or through prophecies already fulfilled. Induced syntactical self-evidence is not powerful enough to erase the strenuousness and artificiality of such procedures.

SEMANTICS

Semantics of Voyage

Voyage values are at the opposite of the Foundation's abstract concepts. "Experientialism," one classical *topos* of traditional interpretation, does not mean empiricism. Rather, it expresses surprise before what is absolutely new, terrifying as much as marvelous. *Who are these people... What customs? What beliefs? Who is their king?* (I.45), the navigators ask, at the beginning of the travel, when some small boats come near the fleet, from an island unknown. Something different appears where nothing seemed to exist—and this is by itself fascinating. *Our people were overjoyed and could only / Stare in excitement at this wonder* (ibid.). Such is the tonality of Gama's tour. The *unexpected* shall remain its mode.

The *sights* (V.17), *distinctly seen* (V.18), the *secrets and the mysteries of the deep*, as Adamastor the giant says (V.42), are *those dangerous things of the sea / that men do not understand* (V.16). Camões exhibits them in their *naked and crude truth* (V.89)—at the borderline of natural experience. Novelty is extra-ordinary and

strange, in Gama's trip as well as in the discoveries predicted by Tethys.

Not only St. Elmo's fires, scurvy, *current(s) of such force / [that] Our ships could make no headway in their course* (V.66), or tempests like... *some dreadful dream* (94)—but, also, cannibalism (X. 126), lands peopled in days bygone by *Children of the horrible coupling / Of a solitary woman and a dog—* where nowadays *men wear on their genitals / Tiny tinkling bells, a custom / Invented very subtly by their queen* (X.122). And, still, birds of paradise *which never alight / But fall to earth the day they end their flight* (X.132), *magic rivers* where *twigs that fall in it are turned into stone* (X.134). And so on. Sumatra is an example (see X.135.1-6).

In consequence Camões may comment: *O what an influence of signs and stars! / What strange, what marvelous qualities! And all without lying, plain truth* (V.24). Expression involves intensification and in poetry intensification becomes transfiguration. Poetic expression changes the status of things. Adventure and discovery are themselves *poetic*, not a sum of facts: there is no experientialism here, it is only for a small part, and the less interesting, that Camões refers to reality and to the concepts that subsume reality.

Seas stick to the hulls, they soak into the boats that travel across them: *Here we careened the ships, scraping / The hulls clean of six months' sludge, / And barnacles and limpets, harmful / Parasites of an ocean voyage* (V.79.1:4). Triton, Neptune's messenger, re-covered by molluscs and shellfish, is the living image of the fusion of D. Manuel's caravels with the elements.

The hairs of his beard and the hair
Falling from his head to his shoulders
Were all one mass of mud, and visibly
Had never been touched by a comb;
Each dangling dreadlock was a cluster
Of gleaming, blue-black mussels.
On his head, by way of coronet, he wore
The biggest lobster-shell you ever saw.

His body was naked, even his genitals,
So as not to impede his swimming,
But tiny creatures of the sea
Crawled over him by the hundreds;
Crabs and prawns and many others

Which wax with the growing moon,
 Crackles and oysters, and the slimy husks
 Of convoluted whelks and other mollusks.
 (VI.17-18)

Strangeness is disquieting as it establishes near intimacy with an absolute alien. But it cannot be denied, Triton is *plain truth*, as much as Adamastor's hallucinations or the Island of Love. They are truer than perception because they convey the mythical truth of *The Lusiads*.

Simple, matter of fact perception conceals prodigies. The famous waterspout is an instance of this intensification and transfiguration of reality. Something that is *seen distinctly* (V.19) is transformed, for *all* who saw it, into *an excessive miracle and, sure, an highly astonishing thing* (V.18). *Fascinium* becomes *tremendum*. *A little vapour ... grows heavier by the moment and suppurating with the huge volume taken up* (20). It appears to the sailors as *a purple leech ... / on the lips of some beast / ... Slaking its thirst with another's blood* (21). Then it disintegrates—and, *sated and replete, it returned to the water the water it took* (22), as if the waterspout had in fact become a leech, and water blood.

In the same hallucinatory vein, the Island of Love displaces itself parallel to the fleet. H. Macedo pointed out that it remains invisible until the fleet sees it: it is at this moment that Venus immobilizes the Island.⁷ Likewise, Adamastor is hallucinated by the expedition, in the form of a cloud initially perceived as having a human form. (A complex and ambiguous relation links Adamastor to the Island of Love.) And Adamastor became a rock owing to an hallucination of his own (V.55-56). Love is lived as hallucinated reality, in a literal sense.

Semantics of Foundation

The action of Voyage on Foundation has no formal counter-effects. Except for two or three exceptions, Voyage is never told in the perfect, in the past, or in the third person. The primacy of Foundation is semantical. In addition to the values proper to Voyage and to Foundation, the "truth" of *The Lusiads* would result from the syntactic power of Voyage combined with its semantical subordination to Foundation. Camões aims at insufflating poetic expressivity into history and at giving a political-religious significance to seafaring and discovery. History would thereby acquire the *self-evidence* of poetry—and poetry would be *validated*. However, the first operation does not succeed

completely and the second fails. The semantics of Voyage resists the will to power of the Portuguese.

It is easy to show how the teleology of history would bring about the reconstruction of Gama's trip. The set *community-identity-necessity-Catholicism* re-elaborates the set *expedition-difference-possibility and contingency-paganism*. A *new expression* of the Voyage would obtain.

In this light, (i) the navigators represent the whole Portuguese community, the expedition functions as its *delegation*. (ii) The identity of the community is preserved within difference (which is a category belonging to Voyage): identity takes the form of *continuity*. Vagrancy is redeemed by the constancy of a project. During the trip, "discoveries in series" between Mozambique and Malindi (Camões's narration), and between Lisbon and Mozambique (Vasco's narration), secure continuity. They will be expanded, thanks to complete discovery of the East, and of Brazil to the West. The "all-embracing" voyage of Magellan closes the cycle ideally: in fact, Magellan was *in all his actions Portuguese / If not completely in his loyalties* (X.140). Even if the series is not yet finished (see V.14: the South Pole awaits to be discovered), such an unfaltering continuity guarantees its future conclusion. Tethys explains to Vasco that discoveries obey a mysterious necessity: *There are lands beyond, veiled from you / Until the time is ripe to reveal them*.

(iii) Necessity invests contingency and possibility. Vasco da Gama's expedition ceases to be a mere possibility—it *must be accomplished*, as it was unanimously decided by King Manuel's Council. (Vasco had a premonition of it: *My heart had always whispered to me / Of some great enterprise of this kind* [IV.77].) Anticipation of action supervenes in the person who will enforce it.

Necessity submits contingency in two manners, at least. (iv) Foundation transmits to Voyage its *inaugural character*. It is always for the first time that things happen, be it the contemplation of southern heavens, the revelation of new seas, the discovery of stupendous prodigies. This is said in the famous third verse of *The Lusíads* (*By oceans where none had ventured*), and is reiterated in VII.30.7. In other words, discoveries are presented as an *invention of reality*. India's discovery, through which Portugal re-founds itself, is the critical point where the new future comes into being.

(v) Necessity reduces contingency also insofar as it transforms the expedition into a *providential mission*. Vasco must found the New Kingdom (I.1). Mars, god of war, is on the side of the Portuguese (I.36-41), as well as Venus, *ordained / by the Eternal Father to guard the Portuguese* (IX.18, see also

VII.15.2-8, p. 142). Since the beginning of the poem the reader knows that Jove ordered their victory (I.24-29, 40-41) and Jove himself announces it to Venus (II.44-45). Thanks to that, Vasco manages to elude all of Bacchus's ambushes. *Success of the expedition* is but the first stage of the defeat of the Moslems and of pagan gods.

Unlike the semantics of *Voyage*, the semantics of *Foundation* is not a natural one.

Expression

The semantics of *Foundation* is *un-natural*. This means that the providential mission of Gama and of the Portuguese is unable to attain a mode of expression equivalent, in one way or another, to the self-evidence of *Voyage*. Everything the *Voyage* presents, as it progresses, is undeniable truth, it belongs to the daily experience of the navigators. Each trait of the linguistic apparatus of the *Voyage* suggests other types of self-evidence: of the person (subjectivity does not question itself), of mood (*deixis* points to what is manifest), of aspect (action "in progress" cannot be put in doubt) and of tense (the self is immanent to his present experience.) That is to say, the syntax of *Voyage* assembles four independent factors of self-evidence: each one contributes to the self-evidence of subjective experience. The same applies to the episodes, which form the narrative structure. As remarked above, the unfolding of a *scene* is the counterpart of syntactical self-evidence.

Thus, both semantics (the wonders of discovery) and form (morphology and narration) appear to be an adequate expression of *Voyage*. The *Voyage's* form is coherent, powerful and complex. Semantics and form cohere too, they require each other. Therefore, the formal structures *lead to*, and *fit*, the semantics of *Voyage*. (*En passant*, voyage is an apt metaphor for life because they both have the same linguistic basis.)

On the contrary, *Foundation* does not conduce to self-evidence of any kind—neither that of experience, nor that of form. *Foundation* founds itself on an act of *self-designation*, it rests on a "sovereign" decision of the *will*. The identity and the communality of a country, and its necessary, imperial and Catholic destiny, do not correspond to any natural given. They are artifacts, elements of an ideology that Camões impinges on his readers' minds. In consequence, only the Portuguese, and not all of them (remember the departure from Lisbon), will recognize themselves in it. It is the stamp of Camões's genius that he stresses the constancy of the Moslems' and the Indians' refusal

of Portugal's imperial project, as if Camões's care for truth were more powerful than ideology. But this is also a hallmark of failure. *Conciliation of Foundation to Voyage does not achieve satisfactory expression.*

The *syntax* of Voyage acts upon Foundation. Its effect of re-actualization is limited, though: it does not correspond to the status of the past (irrecoverable loss) and it contradicts its semantics. Vagrancy does not mix well with imperial destiny. As for *narration*, the resurrection of history remains for a large part artificial: the syntactical operation is not entirely accomplished. The re-actualization effect only succeeds well—exceedingly well—as regards *lyrical episodes*, for instance the story of Pedro and Inês—and as regards everything that concerns human existence in general.

Semantical operations are less felicitous still. The taking over of Voyage by Foundation is *conceptual*, it does not follow from procedures similar to the effects Voyage attempts to induce on Foundation. It consists in an application of Catholic and imperial values from outside, so to say—resulting in mere overload of meaning. Taking over does not embody human expectations, therefore it cannot generate transfigurations. Here, adequate expression would require that the reader feel that *Voyage aspires* (“from inside”) *to its own inscription in the grandeur of The Lusiads’ political project.*

However, this does *not* happen in *The Lusiads*. Foundation's heavy and affected style is not a “matter of taste”: nobody would think of accusing Camões of “bad taste”! It is not required by the epic code, either. The reinforcement of semantic values, up to the triumphalist and tautological proclamation of Portugal's right to conquest, appears to the reader as bare defective expression. *Conciliation does not manage to find its form*, the need for expression and the need for form do not co-adapt, ideology does not become poetry. Some examples: the “singing” of the Nymph (X.68), or the panegyric of Nun'Alvares, the great captain, by Paulo da Gama (VIII.32). Camões the narrator does not express himself more gracefully (for instance, VII.25) and Camões the author is as little at ease:

To you, heirs of Lusus, I have this to say:
Your share of the earth is a small one,
And small, too, your portion of Christ's
Fold, shepherded from Heaven;
You, whom no forms of danger
Prevented from conquering the infidel,

Nor greed, nor reluctance in sacrifice
 To the Holy mother of God in paradise.
 (VII. 2)

The problems of expression met by Camões could not find a solution. They relate to the opposition between paganism and Catholicism, between poetry and power. To put it in a nutshell.⁸ Mythology is the symbolical framework of Voyage. Jove and Venus protect the Portuguese of whom Bacchus is the enemy. Intrigues in Olympus run parallel to action, all along Gama's journey. But Portugal has celebrated a covenant with the Christian God, not with Jove. How to reconcile polytheism with monotheism? We know Camões's answer. Paganism would only be a poetical operator. The Nymph explains that paganism is a collection of *mere fables / Dreamed by mankind in his blindness. / We serve only to fashion delightful / Verses...* (X.82).

However, this way out is far from satisfactory. If the goal of Voyage is to restore Portugal to his divine mission, and if Voyage is under the aegis of Olympus, then the Portuguese God requires pagan gods, poetically as much as politically. Therefore, he requires also Bacchus, Portugal's fierce opponent. Furthermore, Bacchus is definitely legitimized insofar as the Moor does not submit to the Portuguese. Vasco does all he can to form an alliance with the Samorin (VII.60 and 62) but the Samorin refuses—owing to the maneuvering of Bacchus. This amounts to acknowledging that the Moor's point of view does not yield to the Portuguese's. *As a consequence, Bacchus ceases to be a fiction.* He cannot be a bare stylistic device because the Moor, not entitled to exist *de iure*, resists *de facto*. And, through Bacchus, it is the whole pagan pantheon that *The Lusíads* rehabilitates.

Notes

¹ "O efeito-Lusíadas," in Fernando Gil and Helder Macedo, *Viagens do Olhar*, Porto, Campo das Letras, 1998, pp. 13-75. My analysis had the purpose of testing a philosophical hypothesis on self-evidence, developed in *Traité de l'évidence*, Grenoble, 1993. Concepts such as ostension, the progressive, the indicative, etc. are categories of self-evidence as I understand it. In the same volume: "Viagens do olhar: os mares dos *Lusíadas*," pp. 77-120.

² Unlike Professor Subramanyan, who quotes and extensively comments on some lines of my study without caring to mention either its title (the reader is allowed to think it was never published), or *Viagens do Olhar*, I have the pleasure of indicating the references of his article: "Somos el mundo: el discurso de la autarcía en la tierra de los descubrimientos," in *istor, Revista de História Internacional* (México), Ano III n° 8, Primavera 2002. My study is analysed on pp. 174-175.

³ And, of course, this opposition is not *a priori* and universal; I don't venture to go beyond *The Lusiads*. (This is an answer to a question put by Professor Helen Vendler.)

⁴ With some slight alterations, I follow Professor Landeg White's translation: *The Lusiads*, New York and London, Oxford UP, 1999.

⁵ For further details, see "O efeito-*Lusiadas*," § 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, §§ 12-13.

⁷ H. Macedo, "A poética da verdade d' *Os Lusíadas*," in *Viagens do Olhar*, 138-139.

⁸ See "O efeito-*Lusiadas*," §§ 20-25.

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Post-Imperial Bacchus: The politics of literary criticism in Camões studies 1940-2001

Hélio J. S. Alves

Abstract. A post-imperial approach to Camões cannot ignore the figure of Bacchus. As Camões's very epic might suggest, Bacchus strongly tends to constitute a non-subject for both "imperial" and "liberal" critics. Given that context, one ought to denounce the politics of criticism apparently sustained by reliable philological practice and show how they silence or put aside a presence that, also through philology, cannot but dominate the meaning of *Os Lusíadas*.

Baco [...] é o problema dos *Lusíadas*¹

Arguably the most important critical reference today on the relationship between epic poetry and imperialism is *Epic and Empire*, published by Yale professor David Quint. The subtitle of this indispensable work, "Politics and generic form from Virgil to Milton," as the author himself states (369n15), is supposed to elicit memories of C. M. Bowra's classic 1945 study, *From Virgil to Milton*. In a clear testimony of the pervasive intertextuality of literary criticism, Quint phrases his relationship with his predecessor as one of "rewriting." Exactly as the epic poems read by both authors, Quint chooses, quite adequately, his most influential precursor in the criticism of so-called "secondary epic" so as to overshadow him through a process that involves supplanting and refusal, as well as a considerable dose of admiration.

Considering that a substantial part of Quint's book revolves around the question of imperial representation of the relations between Western and

Eastern powers, and that we owe to his study some illuminating pages on Camões's *Os Lusíadas*, it is somewhat surprising to find in it no mention, critical or otherwise, of Bowra's interpretation of the gods in the Portuguese epic. In fact, Quint chooses Adamastor as the central symbolic figure of non-Western identities, while Bowra, having observed the historical content of the giant's episode, had clearly stated that Adamastor represented only the "untamed forces of nature" defying the maritime heroes (126). I would guess that Quint, finding an African connection in the episode, decided to "rewrite" indeed that section of Bowra's, noting that the natural forces, which Adamastor is supposed to represent in the older critic, are, in fact, a cover-up for the silent, effaced, African identities met by the Portuguese in their voyages and, developing the implication, already found in Bowra, that the Giant of the Cape symbolized the very triumph, in its overwhelming pride, of the heroes he is threatening.

However, by choosing to work on the Adamastor episode as an axis that makes other themes in the poem converge towards it (the Veloso anecdote, the sea-storm, the sea-nymphs etc.), Quint chose to avoid, not only the most important mythological symbol of the alien, Eastern, identities in Camões's epic, but also the one which, according to Bowra's essay, best exemplifies the ideological arguments for empire, particularly for Western political, cultural and "spiritual" preeminence.² I am referring, of course, to the god Bacchus. In a scheme of things involving the rewriting of a predecessor in the field, Quint's silencing of Bowra's most unambiguous form of legitimation of empire through literary criticism places him inside the group of intellectuals whose treatment of poetry I shall call "liberal" for their theoretical commitment to freedom of interpretation, but also for their lack of real engagement with the most forceful ideological issues that texts, both artful and critical, are promoting.³ In the game of winners and losers Quint creates for rhetorical epic, the final result is known even before the game has begun. Virgil, Tasso, Camões praise the winners; Lucan, Ercilla, Milton make claims for the losers. In this sense, as we shall see, Quint's liberalism ends up at least accepting, possibly encouraging (and possibly unwillingly), a view of the politics of identity and epic poetry in general, as well as of the poetic structure of *Os Lusíadas* in particular, which coincides with Bowra's, to my mind, "imperial" agenda.

C. M. Bowra's book, as has been suggested above, provides an excellent example of "imperial" criticism of the kind David Quint finds rhetorically illustrated in that which he calls "versions of Actium," i.e., the pattern which,

in epic narrative's imperialist discourse, is followed in its perceptions and representations of identity.⁴ Thus, for Bowra, the god Bacchus means "the spirit of the East in its vanity, cunning and disorder." This clearly vicious qualification is applied not only to the Greek god, however, as Bowra clarifies almost immediately afterwards: "So in *Os Lusíadas* Bacchus aptly typifies these qualities of the East which are opposed to the order and reason of the West" (112). It is, therefore, the East itself, the oriental shores visited by Vasco da Gama and others in Africa and Asia, that is characteristically vain, cunning and chaotic, while the West, of which the Portuguese are the first imperial representatives, will speak for the opposite virtues.

But Bowra's ideological affirmations go even further. From his perspective, Bacchus is a symbol of the eastern "barbarism" that is figuratively expressed, in the poem, by the god's creation of "violence and disorder in the elements" of Nature (113). Bacchus, therefore, is about evil (the "evil forces of the world"), an evil that the Portuguese epic supposedly depicts as defeated, since, in Bowra's words, "the discovery of India [...] is a great victory for harmony and order in physical nature and in the human heart" (114). In other words, Western imperialism is equated with harmony, order, civilization, all-embracing Good. Naturally, "imperial" criticism such as this identifies its opinion with the poet's, making Camões-as-author responsible for such a view of his and our world.

If it could be argued that, by writing that essay on *Os Lusíadas*, Bowra is in fact contributing, with a late conservative effort, to the political discourse legitimating empire, particularly the British empire during its Second-World-War wane, contemporary Portuguese criticism, living with, and in many respects from, a nationalist ideology of empire, settled for a long time with similar views of Camões's epic message.

Hernâni Cidade, writing in 1943—three years after the *Exposição do Mundo Português* which represented the apex of the Portuguese brand of fascism in terms of cultural policy and artistic achievement—declares in his *A Literatura Portuguesa e a Expansão Ultramarina* that Bacchus is a personification of hostile Nature and of local and private economic and political interests (282). It is significant that, in Cidade's characteristically friendly and amenable tone, Bacchus is a symbol of the pettiness of those interests when faced with, according to his *Luís de Camões, o Épico* of 1950, "a missão [de] estabelecer na Terra a hegemonia da civilização" (113).⁵ Cidade's option is to emphasize the unity of vision presiding over the entire structure of the poem,

as if Camões had been talking all along about Civilization's benign conquest of the world. The thought that Arabs or Asians might not be interested in this "civilizing" power, other than for the wrong reasons, never occurs, since from Cidade's equation of his perspective with Camões's, nothing can be envisaged outside the imperialized nation. The keyword here is *ecumenismo*: according to Cidade, Camões is the voice of the union between Church and State in the expansion of civilization among all domains and races. Everything other than this inspiring and supposedly universal "high ideal" (*alto ideal*) amounts to mere detail, *pormenores* that Camões does not lower himself to mention. Amongst these "details" are included, in Cidade's phrasing, "relações entre Portugueses e povos que sujeitaram ao seu domínio [...] que patenteiam as feridas abertas pela violência da fúria guerreira" (*O Épico*, 75). This is clearly Bacchus's place in the poem: an outsider whose "nature" is to represent the petty private interests of those who have no place in Portuguese *ecumenismo* and therefore end up simply disappearing into oblivion.

The latter is exactly the view propounded explicitly by historian Jorge Borges de Macedo in an essay published in 1972 for the fourth centenary of the publication of *Os Lusíadas*. His "philological" choice of taking Bacchus as the god of forgetfulness, serves him to emphasize how those who chose not to collaborate with Portuguese *objectivos ecuménicos*, once again because of private, implicitly petty, interests (*interesses particulares*), are deemed to vanish from Camões's poem and from history itself.⁶ Bacchus is equally doomed to invisibility in the introduction of a same-year edition of *Os Lusíadas* by another of the distinguished doyens of Portuguese University, Álvaro da Costa Pimpão,⁷ although he reworks the symbolism attached to the god in a slightly different sense, albeit with similar claims for philological rigour. While Borges de Macedo chose Plutarch and Heitor Pinto as authorities for his reading of Bacchus, Pimpão preferred Arrian's explanation that the Arabs of Alexander the Great's time adored only two gods, Heaven and Bacchus. In this context, Camões would have chosen that god as enemy of the Portuguese, because he had been the one the Arabs had adored. This way, the Arabic populations of Alexander's day are made equivalent to the Islamic adversaries of da Gama's and Camões's times, without the critic once indicating where and how the epic text impels the philologist to arrive at such a conclusion. In both 1972 essays, the complexity of the Greek and Roman myths involving Bacchus is overlooked, and the philological truth-claims rely on arbitrary classical and Renaissance sources without apparent authority, either

in Camões's text, or in its demonstrable intertexts. This is, of course, typical of Ideology leading the way for its handmaiden Philology.

It is in this context, it would seem, that one can understand that which may be the clearest manifesto for an oppositional reading of Camões in the "liberal" sense, a short text by prize-winning essayist Eduardo Lourenço entitled *Camões 80*. After stating, in what seems to be an argument against Hernâni Cidade, that the Portuguese should not make Camões more "unified" than he was or could be, since the poet represents the maximum expression of *contradiction* (I am paraphrasing), Lourenço writes:

A Direita pode servir-se mais *naturalmente* da letra camoniana do que a Esquerda. Não se tem privado de o fazer e continuará. [...] enfim, é exacto que o Canto épico camoniano contém [uma] mais que exaltada versão do ideário "contra-reformista" que foi o nosso, de portugueses, no século XVI. Escamotear esta evidência é absurdo.

However, he adds, there is another side to the "Camões question," the one Lourenço describes as follows:

No corpo e na alma camonianas, na sua paixão pela mulher-musa e no seu entendimento, corre ainda o ardente rio da sensualidade e do amor da vida [...] No seu coração Vénus atravessa ainda o espaço que separa o nosso Desejo do sexto céu onde desarmada se abandona ao terrestre amor sublimado. Um vento de Liberdade (não política, como nós a entendemos), mas cultural, sensível, transgressiva, lambe as páginas do Canto [...] Camões [só] pode "pousar" no palco cultural da Esquerda [...] como encarnação daquela Ideia que de Ficino a Gôngora se faz poema...

In general terms, this is the guideline that "liberal" criticism of Camões has followed at least since António José Saraiva began expounding his theories in the late 1940s, of which I find a perfect resumé in an essay by the Brazilian intellectual José Guilherme Merquior:

[...] como todos aprendemos com António José Saraiva, o sentido último do poema não é o de exortação bélica e nacional, mas [...] o depreendido da própria trama mitológica, onde desde o início os navegantes se colocam sob o amorável signo de Vénus.⁸

An extensive example of the “liberal” view I have just illustrated can be found in the work of Helder Macedo. From this author’s perspective, one which, incidentally, has been adopted by some schoolbooks in Portugal, “o tema mais profundo [de *Os Lusíadas*] é a iniciação através do amor.”⁹ As with Saraiva’s earlier studies and the post-revolutionary criticism published for the fourth centenary of the poet’s death in 1980, this is a view that turns Venus into the overarching character of the epic and Camões into the poet of love. A significant growth in the interest for Camões’s lyric poetry and its conjoined meaning with the epic is another result of these approaches. Sublimated erotic love, with a reminder of its supposedly transgressive content, is fostered as the anchor whereby *Os Lusíadas* can still be a great poem for the political left. Unsurprisingly, Bacchus has no room of his own in the scheme of things proposed by these critics. At the most, he represents the degradation of such love,¹⁰ a degradation that somehow goes so far as to turn him into a child-devouring ogre.¹¹

This view of the overall meaning of Camões’s poem, the disengaging understanding of him as poet of unsolvable contradiction and passionate love, has not, to be fair, satisfied Saraiva’s later research. Once he returned to the study of *Os Lusíadas* after his Marxist phase, from 1972 onwards, Saraiva was able to accommodate the warring imperial ideology with the narrative of loving desire by encountering what he calls an “aesthetic law” that, in his view, presides over the conception of *Os Lusíadas*. Now, Saraiva tried to demonstrate that the epic has nothing to do with the intimate thoughts of its author, that the politics of the poem is not the politics purported by Camões the person. In his opinion, the Portuguese epic follows a deliberate authorial aesthetic effort at *objective timelessness*, an effort that, though not completely successful (because the historical, empirical, Camões emerges once in a while), allows it to remain ever impervious to the concerns of its and our times. The militant rhetoric the epic exposes in favour of war against Islam, for instance, is considered part of the objectivity supposedly inherent to the genre as Camões understood it:

Quanto à cruzada, quer Camões estivesse de acordo com ela, quer não, era o estereótipo por excelência e não podia faltar [...] Camões era estritamente *objetivo*, quer dizer, desenvolvia um estereótipo independente dele próprio (mas talvez assumido) quando via na cruzada o destino e a vocação portuguesa na história universal.¹²

In this way, in spite of a slight and uncomfortable hesitation (in the expression “talvez assumido”), Camões and his “liberal” critics are exempted from engagement with the politics expressed in the text, a politics that obviously, as Lourenço implies, continues to be a sort of embarrassment for the left-wing of literary criticism.

I would argue, then, perhaps rather perversely, that what unites the “liberal” critics of Camões, apart from thematic elements like the narrative and symbolic predominance of Venus, is the achievement of a clear conscience with respect to the embarrassing politics celebrated in the poem. In distinguishing themselves from the nationalist *ecumenismo*, the “liberal” critics wish to remind us, as Merquior puts it, that “o ‘poema da raça’ pode efectivamente ser lido como uma mais ampla, mais completa e perene mensagem humana.”¹³

The actual result of the attempts at reinterpreting *Os Lusíadas* in a way that makes it politically harmless to the left-wing, however, is a narrowing of the semantic power of Camões’s epic poetry. Bacchus is a good instance of this. Even more than the imperialist perspectives, which at least found a role for him as the symbol of the enemy whose necessary destruction fills the Portuguese with a sense of imperial identity, the “liberal” critics cannot envisage a place, within their structures of interpretation, for the only god opposing the chivalric adventures of love, discovery and cognition. If, for readers like Bowra and Cidade, Bacchus represents the Eastern vice and interests that require defeat, for the “liberals” the god either appears in the role of monster or is an outsider (because that is what a *monster* means) to such an extent that he does not even turn up for discussion. Therefore, although the non-conformity of Bacchus to the latter’s thematic interpretations may be occasionally observed—in any case, a rare phenomenon—this dyonisiac invisibility is really met with relief, since it helps in avoiding commitment to the political analysis of that which effectively goes on in the poem. In the end, as in the imperialist conservative *position*, the marginalization or absence of Bacchus has become convenient to the liberal *opposition*.

Now that the last outposts, Macau and East Timor, have finally gone from the remnants of the Portuguese empire, a truly post-imperial Bacchus, as well as a new look at the epic text’s ideology, ought to become a reality. I could argue, as British cultural materialists do, that ideologically biased readings are inevitable and necessary to counter both reactionary and “liberal” dominant interpretations. Nevertheless, I prefer to encourage analysis of the phallacies of philology as employed by critics very much respected, in many cases

rightly, for their work on Camões. Besides, Bacchus has clearly been much underrated as a character and symbol in *Os Lusíadas*. It is far from enough to notice how the god is the moving force behind the story-line, although a lot of the critical work I have mentioned so far seems reluctant to arrive even at this obvious point. Some attention to what Camões effectively wrote and to the intertexts with which he, in all likelihood, involved himself, should be able to afford a post-imperial, if not postcolonial, perspective on his epic, an approach philologically engaged in understanding and confronting the undeniably central political motivations of such a text as *Os Lusíadas*.

To begin with, the very title of the epic is almost tantamount to propaganda of Bacchus's preeminence in it. It is certain that Camões found in *Os Lusíadas* echoes of other titles, namely of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, proper to the suggestion of the classic epic genre. However, this fine-wrought word, as it repeats a humanist Latin neologism identifying the Portuguese, enters fully and deliberately within the dyonisiac realm.

First of all, as the poem itself states, the obscure character recalled in the title, Lusus, is both the mythical origin of the Portuguese and a son of Bacchus (III, 21 and VIII, 2-4). The nineteenth-century socialist Oliveira Martins, in a still valuable essay on this poem, quotes João de Barros, the poet's older contemporary, to the fact that the first origins of Portugal lay with Bacchus.¹⁴ In a sense, it can be sustained that Camões's epic tells the tale of a struggle for identity between father and children, in itself a subject of tremendous psychoanalytical interest. What is perhaps most relevant, though, is that this fact places Camões in an extremely unorthodox position as author of epic poetry: as far as I know, there was no epic precedent in having the heroes being thoroughly antagonized in the main narrative by their own father. By comparison, other interesting readings of the title made so far, including those based especially on its Luís Franco manuscript form *Elusíadas*, seem merely speculative.¹⁵ The title of Camões's epic, then, is partly a statement of Portuguese heroic etiology, which emphasizes a disconnection, a fault that turns mythico-historical continuity into a field of deeply ingrained resistances.

If Bacchus is the "voice within" Portuguese origins, he is also the lord of India, both in Greek myth and in *Os Lusíadas*. Just as he represents the first memory of Portugal's identity, he represents also the knowing thoughts of the Oriental anti-subjects of the epic, as much in Africa as in Asia. In this respect, contrary to what some "imperial" critics have argued over time, Bacchus

never lies to his eastern interlocutors or to himself. All he does is argue rhetorically against the heroes and in favour of the old order: supremacy of the gods over humankind and conservation of African, Indian and Muslim “ways of life.” He does attempt (actually with success) to fool the Portuguese in Camões’s narrative, and it is the deceitful side of him that imperialism has emphasized in literary criticism. However, as I hope to have shown in my recent book on the semiotic system of sixteenth-century epic poetry,¹⁶ Bacchus’s deceit is perfectly suited to his place as the noblest opponent in the main narrative of *Os Lusíadas*. In the power tactics the poet applies to the relationship between Bacchus and the heroes, deceit is contextualized positively as an indispensable and unavoidable resource of every good leader struggling, as is the case, against all odds.

Finally, one should also reevaluate the virtually unchallenged present notion that Bacchus is effectively defeated in *Os Lusíadas*. His last appearance in the poem is another moment of Camões’s deliberately defying gestures towards genre and intertextual codes. True triumph in the epic means leading the enemy to accept fate and the project of the hero. It is so in Homer and Virgil, whose avenging gods are the indubitable epic models for Bacchus. It is not so in Camões. Bacchus’s last word in *Os Lusíadas* is not a suggestion of Western *imperium sine fine*, but rather an order for a future of Oriental resistance with no foreseeable end (VIII, 50). And when the fictional prize comes for the navigators in the form of an island, a prize that should mean the allegorical victory of the heroes’ project, the irony is that it is filled with the shade of Bacchus. As Fernando Gil has put it, “a Ilha de Vénus é abertamente e exclusivamente *dionisiaca*: ou seja, *Vénus inimiga de Baco dá por prémio aos navegantes os valores de Baco*.”¹⁷ The orgiastic nature of the meeting between men and goddesses, which forced neo-platonic readings have tried to cover up, is the sound philological conclusion to the famous stanzas of the Ninth Canto. Bacchus can thus silently overcome, as the liberator (*liáios*; *liber*) that he is, the strict regime of discovery and war that the heroes and their heavenly protectors were following.

But as he does so, *the god of freedom* is also showing why the heroic project as imperially designed must end in some sort of failure. And how could it be otherwise, since the future beyond the poem, as Camões slyly seems to be predicting, will have Acteon devoured by his dogs just before Bacchus sounds his hoarse cry of triumph?¹⁸

Notes

¹ Gil 51.

² The word "spiritual" is Bowra's. A passage on p. 125 of his book seems to make Quint's avoidance more glaring, since it compares Adamastor directly with Bacchus with respect to exactly those issues that Quint is discussing: "Just as Bacchus symbolises the difficulties which the Portuguese meet on their journey to the East, so Adamastor symbolises a natural obstacle, [...] the point where East meets West."

³ My most direct references for the definition of a "liberal" literary criticism are the following: José Guilherme Merquior, "Tarefas da Crítica Liberal," *Jornal do Brasil*, 7 and 14th March 1981, collected in his book *As Ideias e as Formas*; Alan Sinfield, "Macbeth: History, Ideology and Intellectuals," *Critical Quarterly* 28, 1986, collected in the book *Faultlines*. It could be argued, perhaps, that this paper is also a rewriting of those two essays.

⁴ See Quint 21-49.

⁵ He adds: "mais progressiva," in the edition of his book available to me (1985). Does he really mean that Western civilization is older than Eastern, or is it simply a printing mistake for "progressiva"? In either case, the ideological dominant is obvious, although perhaps not consciously intentional.

⁶ "História e doutrina do poder n' "Os Lusíadas," *Garcia da Orta*, Revista da Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, Número Especial, 1972; reprinted in Jorge Borges de Macedo, *Os Lusíadas e a História*. The passages quoted are from pages 115-117 of the latter edition.

⁷ Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, leitura, prefácio e notas de Álvaro Júlio da Costa Pimpão, 1972. I quote from the 3rd edition, Instituto Camões/Ministério da Educação, Lisbon, 1992.

⁸ *Razão do Poema* 86-7.

⁹ "A Poética da verdade" 121-141. This statement, from page 123, is a recent one, but it summarizes the author's views ever since his *Camões e a Viagem Iniciática*.

¹⁰ "degradante submissão do amor ao corpo" is, in Helder Macedo's phrase, the symbolic value of the god Bacchus in *Camões e a Viagem Iniciática* (41).

¹¹ "[No] esquema iniciático da obra, a identificação de Baco com o baixo amor ganha uma importância fundamental na medida em que, mitologicamente, era [...] também o pai de Luso, o antepassado mítico dos Portugueses. [...] Mas é o falso pai, o pai tornado Ogre, que os próprios filhos procura destruir." (*Camões e a Viagem Iniciática* 41-2).

¹² Saraiva, "O objectivismo d' "Os Lusíadas,"" 26. Essay reprinted with most of the other post-1972 texts by Saraiva on Camões's epic in his *Estudos sobre a Arte d'"Os Lusíadas."*

¹³ *As Ideias e as Formas* 55.

¹⁴ Martins 167.

¹⁵ There come to mind Fíama Hasse Pais Brandão with her esoteric approach (42) and José Madeira's more recent reading of the poem as "anti-epopeia" (189), although the latter bases himself, it seems unwittingly, on Renaissance interpretations of the word *lusus* repudiated by the Évora humanist André de Resende (cf. Ramalho, especially 151).

¹⁶ Alves 639-641.

¹⁷ Gil 53.

¹⁸ Camões refers to Acteon, in Faria e Sousa's accepted interpretation of the famous passage in the Ninth Canto, as an allegory of his King and so, by extension, of the Nation and Empire. Ancient sources, like Hesiod (*Catalogue of Women*, frag. 113) and Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca*, III, 4, 4), say that Bacchus will one day return to heaven as a triumphant god, while enjoying the company of the dogs that killed Acteon. Needless to say, Camões studies

have been silent on the mythico-symbolic connection between Acteon and Bacchus. There is even one instance of explicit denial that a strong possibility of kingly and national punishment is encoded in the reference to Acteon, in spite of the fact that both Renaissance allegoresis and the Portuguese epic text do suggest that possibility: see Aguiar e Silva 156.

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Africa and the Epic Imagination of Camões

Josiah Blackmore

Abstract. This article advances arguments about the metaphoric presence of Africa primarily in the ideology of *Os Lusíadas* (the episode of Adamastor) and secondarily in the chronicles of Gomes Eanes de Zurara. It proposes that Adamastor is a figure of Renaissance melancholy (in both somatic and prophetic terms) and, as such, represents a melding of interior and exterior forms of consciousness or knowledge. Africa and the Moor function in Camões as an index of the “strange,” a principle of Camonian epic in which the foreign and the alien are repeatedly inscribed into expansionist thought and therefore are an integral component to it. Zurara’s chronicles establish Africa as a primordial space of imperialism and its attendant historiographic discourse under the sign of Saturn, planet of time and melancholics.

Os Lusíadas contains at its core a terrifying eruption of monstrosity. Adamastor, arguably Camões’s most controversial poetic creation, emerges from a roiling tempestuousness at the southern tip of Africa to deliver his notorious prophecies of doom and to grieve autobiographically over the impossibility of reciprocated love from a sea goddess. When Vasco da Gama interrogates the apparition with the terse “Quem és tu?” (V, 49, iii),¹ Adamastor writhes under the weight of the question he would, we gather, prefer not to answer but must, like many of the shades who are compelled to respond to Dante throughout the *Inferno*.² With an “espantoso e grande brado,” Adamastor states: “Eu sou aquele oculto e grande Cabo / A quem chamais vós outros Tormentório” (V, 50, i-ii), adding that “Aqui toda a

Africana costa acabo / Neste meu nunca visto Promontório" (V, 50, v-vi). Such is the proclamation of the "monstro horrendo" who is at once sorrowful and ireful. It is no coincidence that Camões allocates to Adamastor's voice one of the very few instances in the entire poem of *ser* conjugated in the first person singular. This "eu sou," which reverberates thunderously in the ears of Vasco da Gama and his crew (and in the ears of the poem's readers) is a discrete act of self-constitution and identity: Adamastor's verbal syntagm inscribes monstrosity, darkness (both psychological and physiological), and Africa literally and figuratively into the center of the text. We might even call it a moment of self-conjuration, a quasi-magical, numinous manifestation of "os segredos escondidos / Da natureza e do húmido elemento" (V, 42, i-ii).

I invoke the episode of Adamastor as the entrance into some postulations of a more general nature about the metaphors of Africa and its inhabitant, the Moor, in the Camonian imaginary and ideology of expansionism. Africa figures prominently in the map of *Os Lusíadas*, both as a geographical space in which expansionist action occurs (recall that it takes Vasco da Gama and his company five cantos to leave its borders) and as a temporal landscape in which the Portuguese (imperial) past, present, and future converge and in which the historiographic discursivity of maritime Portugal is primordially and emblematically located. The interpretive grappling with Adamastor over a period of centuries (decisively initiated in 1639 with Faria e Sousa's edition) testifies to his problematic status in the poem, and this in turn implicates the continent of which Adamastor is the metonymic representation in the form of the *cabo*. More recently, the problem of Adamastor and Africa has allowed exegesis of the text to participate in broader scholarly discussions, for instance, about Renaissance epic poetry, the politics of national identity and identity formation, the genre of shipwreck narrative, or the voice and presence of Lusophone Africa in a post-imperial world.³

A figure of fear, doubt, and uncertainty phantasmally and diaphanously incarnate, Adamastor marks a liminality that is polysemous in nature. Lipking observes:

"Geographically, Adamastor stands for the place where maps lose their potency—here be monsters; historically, for an unknown part of the past, a legend and reality concealed from the ancients and yet to be explored; epistemologically, for a point beyond which human perceptions fail; theologically, for the forbidden." (215)

Adamastor thus emblemizes the epochal demarcation of an expanding, ideological *oikoumene*, the far-reaching transplantation of matrices of political, linguistic, and cultural patterns of order that lies at the root of all expansionist endeavors. The waves of fear that wash over Adamastor's Portuguese onlookers are thus more than the symbolic representation of a human sentiment prompted by confrontation with the unknown and the dangerous. The formal staging of an episode of anguished interiority—one which contrasts with the putatively external, militaristic, and legislated actions of discovery and conquest—fashions Adamastor as a component of what could be termed the psychomachia of expansion, an interior and interiorizing journey through time, memory, desire, and love that is as pervasive and regular in the Camonian understanding of maritime empire as any series of stratagems relating to *conquista*.

So it is that in one respect we might consider *Os Lusíadas* as Camões's greatest and most elaborate love poem. Love structures the poem not solely as a general, affective disposition expressed through an individualized subject (the kind of love scholars typically find in the *Rimas*) but more importantly as a relational discourse particularly suited to the power dynamics of imperialism and expansion. I am referring to Roland Greene's theorization of (Petrarchan) love in the New World context; Greene argues that love is "a discourse of differences—especially of gender and power. [...] Because of its engagement with such political issues as the distribution of power among agents, the assimilation of difference, and the reciprocal relations of value and desire, Petrarchan amatory discourse finds a new occasion in Europe's encounter with the New World" (6, 9-10).⁴ Adamastor's grief over his unreciprocated love for Thetis coincides with this formulation. Greene removes love (or amatory discourse) from the realm of the purely sentimental and establishes it as a governing conceit through which the more public actions of imperial encounter may be shaped and narrated. In Adamastor's case, this understanding of love allows a reciprocity or oscillation between affective subjectivity and the realization of conquistatorial campaigns.

Adamastor's rageful plaint, then, provides an access to an inward perspective on the expansionist enterprise independent of sentiment. Adamastor is a figure that at once apprehends an outward or geographical/phenomenal world and an inwardly-focused consciousness of time and history. Thematically, Camões accomplishes this perspectival doubling, I want to suggest, by fashioning Adamastor as a figure of melancholy, common in Renaissance litera-

ture. The dual nature of Adamastor's voice signals his melancholic nature: he speaks in a public register when he delivers vengeful prophecies about a collective, national fate, then modulates his speech to an autobiographical, "personal" mode when lamenting his unrequited love and his enduring punishment as rock and earth. On the surface of it, these two registers are distinct: the first might be considered "epic" while the second is more "personal" or "lyric." While this classification of Adamastor's voice into two distinct modes is defensible, it is possible to read these two modes as linked rather than oppositional through the agency of melancholy.

Adamastor boasts traits that evoke prevailing ideas in Renaissance Europe about the nature of melancholy and the melancholic.⁵ Consider the initial description of Adamastor's physicality:

[...] quando hua figura
 Se nos mostra no ar, robusta e válida,
 De disforme e grandíssima estatura;
 O rosto carregado, a barba esqualida,
 Os olhos encovados, e a postura
 Medonha e má, e a cor terrena e pálida;
 Cheios de terra e crespos os cabelos,
 A boca negra, os dentes amarelos. (V, 39)

In ensuing stanzas, other traits become apparent: Adamastor is a self-declared "gigante" (V, 53, viii); he speaks to Gama with a "voz pesada e amara" (V, 49, vii), and cries that his deception by Thetis left him "irado e quase insano" (V, 57, v). The end of his encounter with the Portuguese is punctuated by a "medonho choro" and "sonoro bramido" (V, 60, i and iii-iv).

These characteristics advance a profile of Adamastor in line with two theories of melancholy common in Camões's time. The first, dating to Hippocrates and Galen, holds that melancholy is a physiological condition linked to an abundance of black bile in the body; this forms part of the humoral theory of physiology in which physical and mental conditions are determined by the proportions of the body's four humors or liquids (black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm).⁶ As symptomatic of a predominance of black bile, black is characteristically the melancholic's color, and those suffering from it characteristically exhibit a sad, irreful, morose, or dejected temperament, often placing themselves at a remove from human society. Adamastor's surround-

ing aura of darkness, his black mouth, and his overwhelmingly irate and grief-stricken demeanor all cast Adamastor as a humoral melancholic.⁷ Furthermore, Adamastor's elemental constitution of earth and rock corroborates the association of black bile with earth in melancholy theory (Schiesari 129). As an earthen or telluric figure, Adamastor represents a melancholic sorrow occasioned by loss—in his case, his loss of the nymph Thetis—as symbolized in landscape. Bridget Gellert Lyons notes, “[t]he heart that was oppressed by gross and heavy melancholy humours was imprisoned [...] there was no clear line of distinction [...] between the state of the melancholic's mind and the landscape that he inhabited or projected” (14-15).⁸

The other line of thinking about melancholy is that it is an inspired or exalted state of intellection or artistic ability. The “genial melancholic” is characteristically endowed with the gifts of prophecy and divination.⁹ Adamastor's prophetic function in the temporality of the poem derives from this kind of melancholy. But it also establishes a continuity or similarity between Adamastor and his Portuguese interlocutors that is largely based on a reckoning with the past and the struggle to overcome a melancholic inclination, an inclination that, if realized, produces a stasis of spirit and hence a diminished moral rectitude.¹⁰ In this sense melancholy is the opposite of adventurous daring. Time is Adamastor's worst enemy, locked as he is forever and punitively in the rock, while it is the explorers' greatest ally. Eduardo Lourenço considers the Portuguese philosophical tradition of melancholy, especially as it is set forth in D. Duarte's *Leal Conselheiro*, arguing that melancholy “não é uma modalidade, entre outras, da sensibilidade e do sentimento, mas uma manifestação estrutural do ser humano, afectado pela sua relação com o tempo” (100). It is precisely this temporal dimension of melancholy that Camões exploits in Adamastor, situated as he is on a nodal point of history. Adamastor's melancholy is simultaneously a plaint of impossible love and a once and future lament about the fate of empire and the possibilities of heroism. In this second, future-in-the-past perspective, Adamastor's lament is what Ian Baucom calls “postimperial melancholy,” that is, “a cause for lamentation and an opportunity to [...] mourn the losses of empire” (165).

Adamastor's melancholic traits, his straddling of both interior and exterior realms of existence, and the fear he triggers among the mariners permit a reading of the text in which the negotiation of the unfamiliar underlies the hermeneutic imperatives of the outward-bound imperial consciousness. Such a negotiation happens under the aegis of the “strange,” and Camões's poem

postulates the strange as a key concept of imperialism. As part of the idiom of *Os Lusíadas*, the strange insinuates itself into the grammatical web of Camões's regulated procession of *ottava rima* stanzas, migrating between the syntactic categories of noun, adjective, and adverb. *A estranheza, o estranho, estranhamente*: this repeated lexicon signals not just an effect or by-product of the programmatic displacement and alienation endemic to discovery voyaging but an iterative principle of interaction and alignment with the realms of geographic and demographic alterity that comprise the Portuguese *imperium* and subtend the historiographic productivity that is its axiomatic corollary.

Africa is a primary locus of European expansion. The Portuguese textual preoccupation with Africa is one of the founding discourses of European imperialism. The chronicles of the first half of the fifteenth century establish a series of codes of writing about the colonial other that will be renewed and expanded by figures such as Columbus and later imperialists. (The complexities of this body of writing have much to offer contemporary discussions and theorizations of imperialism, including the influential formulations of thinkers like Tzvetan Todorov and Edward Said.) Central to this discourse is the figure of the Moor. In Camões, and in the work of his historiographic predecessors, especially the chronicles of Gomes Eanes de Zurara, the Moor is the sign of the strange and indexes the emergence of a new culture of history-writing attending the Portuguese exploration and colonization of Africa. Unlike the Moor/Saracen as it is more commonly conceived in Spain or in other countries (that is, the Arabic-speaking inhabitant of North Africa or Iberia), the Portuguese expansionist use of *mouro* widens the semantic range of this label to include the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa and even India. Such a wide applicability elevates the Moor above a standard binary opposition of European/non-European (although this is present as well). A Moor is the symbolic or figural representation of a process of negotiating strange and alien landscapes (geographic, perceptual, discursive), of adjusting epistemological systems to accommodate such landscapes, and of historicizing this process narratively. The Portuguese expansionist Moor emerges at the investiture of historical awareness into the space of Africa—an awareness, of course, that is European rather than indigenous, and of an imperialist bent.

It was Zurara, the chronicler appointed *cronista-mor* as successor to Fernão Lopes, who first fashioned Africa and the Moor as part of a teleology of expansionism in historiographic discourse. Above all, Zurara's chronicles present Africa as the space and place of expansion, a historically familiar geo-

graphical reality that becomes less familiar as the Portuguese campaigns of the Infante D. Henrique work their way down the west coast past Cape Bojador, for centuries one of the end-points of European cartographic knowledge. In the *Crónica da Tomada de Ceuta*, Zurara observes that Ceuta was the first post-diluvian settlement in Africa, founded by Noah's grandson who christened it with a name that means "começo da fermosura" in Chaldaic (10). This foundational myth, for Biblical wanderers the beginning of genealogical descent, is, for Zurara, also a beginning, but now one of an evolving providential mandate which locates in Africa the dawn of the imperial *nação*. The "beauty" of Ceuta in Zuraran expansionist discourse is the city's metonymic relation to the campaign of imperialist ethics that is imbricated in the workings of cosmological destiny and harmony. Ceuta thus initiates an ethical movement of the state which will find symbolic fruition in Camões's "ledo Monçaide" (VII, 28, ii) whose *ledice* is rooted in an Aristotelian notion of happiness as a good attained by action—in Monçaide's case, the decision to return to Portugal with Vasco da Gama's fleet.

In another chronicle, the *Crónica de D. Pedro de Meneses*, Zurara writes:

Porque a prinçipall parte do meu emcarreguo he daar comta e rrazão das cousas que passã nos tempos de minha hydade ou daquellas que passarão tam açerca de que eu posso aver verdadeiro conhecimento—ca, segumdo os amigos escreverão este nome...cronica, prinçipallmemte ouve o seu orig_e fundamemto de Saturno, que quer dezer "tempo", esto porque em grego se chama este planeta Cronô ou Cronos, que synyfica "tempo", assy como no latym este nome quer dezer "tempus", e dhy se deriva cronica, que quer dezer "estoria em que se escrev_os feitos temporais." (173)

Here, the etymological comments explicating the nature of the historiographer's vocation link the writing of history to Saturn, the planet of time. Yet Saturn is also the planet of melancholics. Zurara implicitly aligns the nature of historiography to the planet of melancholy—history-writing is a saturnine activity—in an African context. For Zurara, Africa gives birth to chronistic discourse as it now will be practiced in the age of expansion, and does so under the sign of Saturn. Melancholy and writing merge (at least notionally) and construe expansionist, historiographic productivity (which will include *Os Lusíadas*, profoundly historiographic in nature) as a narrativity allowing for a consciousness of states of alterity and strangeness.

Africa and the Moor, then, in the epic imagination of Camões, reference not solely an externally constituted space of otherness together with its inhabitant but also a process of redefining national and cultural identity as cartographies of knowledge and perception shift under the weight of imperial and empirical newness. In *On the Postcolony*, Achille Mbembe states that “narrative about Africa is always pretext for a comment about something else, some other place, some other people” (3). While Mbembe works in the contemporary sphere, his comment nonetheless characterizes the discursive culture of early modern Portuguese imperialism. Africa emerges in Camões as an interiorized space in which the writing subject (metaphorically) constitutes and expresses itself.

Notes

¹ All citations of *Os Lusíadas* are from the edition by Emanuel Paulo Ramos.

² I credit Manuel de Faria e Sousa (1590-1649) for first reading Adamastor as reminiscent of a punitive and Dantesque universe. In his commentary, Faria e Sousa notes, “el Gigante al respôder reboliò los ojos, i torció la boca, que es rechinar cõ los dientes: i todo esto son señales de cõdenado al infierno [...] como lo vimos [...] singularmente en los lugares de Dâte” (col. 543).

³ See Quint 99-130, Lipking, Blackmore 20-27, and Banks, respectively.

⁴ Greene further states: “Love is a discursive commonplace in this period not because people were generally in love [...] but because it was a widely acknowledged staging area for a variety of problems of the time, such as the drives of the subject to find expression in action, the contradictions and incommensurabilities of desire in its many forms, and the distribution of power in unequal situations” (11).

⁵ Silva observes in the course of an essay on the melancholic aspects of Camões’s lyric poetry that Adamastor is “uma das grandes expressões da melancolia camoniana” (224). Silva’s description of Adamastor as an expression of melancholy refers generally to the sad or tragic aspects of the giant’s condition insofar as his is a story of lost love. For other comments on melancholy in Camões’s lyric, see Earle.

⁶ The classic study of humoral melancholy is Klibansky, et. al.

⁷ Adamastor’s “dentes amarelos” point to a choleric temperament (which derives from too much yellow bile or choler), a temperament closely associated with melancholy.

⁸ In this sense Adamastor is understandably “o carcereiro da sua própria prisão” (Macedo 65). Of note also is Susan Stewart’s remark on giants: “the giant is linked to the earth in its most primitive, or natural, state [...] the gigantic represents a physical world of disorder and disproportion” (74).

⁹ This brand of melancholy was formulated by Aristotle in *Problemata XXX* and propagated throughout Europe by the writings of Italian humanist Marsilio Ficino. For a wide-ranging study of genial melancholy, see Schleiner.

¹⁰ João R. Figueiredo also argues for Adamastor as a stasis, a “virilidade paralisada e tornada grotescamente inútil pela inexistência súbita da mulher que permitiria a consumação do acto” (24).

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Sob o Signo de Deucalião

Eduardo Lourenço

Tivemos um Império sem ter tido um imperador. Aquela famosa ladainha de D. Manuel da nossa soberba guerreira e marítima nova em folha que ainda encantava o Raposo sem império nenhum mais do que o da farsa, não nos dava direito à coroa imperial, essa era filha de Roma por via de Carlos Magno e depois de Carlos V por herança do Santo Império Germânico-românico ou Românico-germânico. Esta falta de legitimidade não era um óbice para aqueles que no Oriente conheceram um outro império que não precisava de legitimidade europeia para se deslumbrar com o seu esplendor precário. Precário mas ainda vivo para rivalizar lá longe com outros potentados mais ricos do que nós, mas sem armas tão modernas como então eram as nossas. Nas mensagens de Albuquerque aos senhores da Ásia, nas missivas dos nossos embaixadores em cortes do Oriente dignas de romances de cavalaria, nas falas de D. João de Castro, é que nós fomos esse império que não tínhamos direito a ser. E livremente o fomos por convicção cristã e suposta superioridade. Sobre eles fundou Camões o nosso único Império, império da realidade fantástica para os mesmos que o fundavam, e de Fé, no sentido mais absoluto do termo e não apenas na sua assumida missão, pois só de Fé no seu futuro vivia e se inventava. O meu amigo Vasco Graça Moura aventou a provocante hipótese de que Camões podia ter escrito os mesmos *Lusíadas* sem ir à Índia. Tecnicamente, a sua opinião tem razão de ser. Tudo aquilo é retórica antiga revisitada por Arisoto ao serviço de João de Barros que, de facto, redigiu as *Décadas* sem nunca ter estado no Oriente. Eu creio, contudo, que sem a sua estadia no nosso Oriente, sem a distância física, cultural (e, podemos dizer, metafísica) que separou Camões do pátrio ninho, ainda mais

pequeno visto de lá do que já era, nunca a visão dos *Lusiadas*, quer dizer, a vivida experiência do contraste entre o pequeno reino lusitano e o *outro mundo* que a Índia representava, poderia ter surgido. Ou então, *Os Lusiadas*, como o pensou em tempo António José Saraiva, teriam ficado apenas como o exemplo do poema artificial requerido pela poética renascentista, sem nenhuma emoção ou transcendência histórica, em suma, sem nenhuma dimensão que então ainda hoje como Césares dele pudéssemos chamar *imperial*.

À parte João de Barros que por romance de cavalaria entreposto já estava vocacionado para conceber como imperial a nossa gesta no Oriente ninguém como Camões ao nível do imaginário, claro está, viveu como imperial ou digna de Império uma história pátria que teve na Índia o seu centro como a mítica da Europa medieval – a de Clarimundo – o tinha tido em Constantinopla. E era de Constantinopla, então já nas mãos dos turcos, que a Índia nos compensava e compensava a Europa na Contra-Reforma. Era na Índia que essa Europa ainda cristã festejava vitórias que no Ocidente não alcançava. Ao menos em vida de Camões. A esse título também *Os Lusiadas* são um paradoxal poema contra-reformista, cristão na ordem ideológica e política sob esse signo, renascentista na ordem cultural, consciente ou inconscientemente encharcado dos perfumes não só da Arábia mas de Chipre e da sua famosa deusa.

Do texto por excelência imperial vive a cultura portuguesa e, literariamente, exceptuando o eclipse pseudo-iluminista de Macedo, vive muito bem. Entre ele e o nosso imaginário as núpcias são permanentes porque as alimenta o corpo da História portuguesa, império sepulto, enterrado, evocado e ressuscitado na sua figura espectral por Garrett, perdido, vagamente admirado como Índia sub-imperialista por Eça e a sua geração (salvo Antero) e, enfim, império de sonho partilhado entre a sedução um pouco mórbida da sua Decadência (da nossa Decadência) e o mito de uma possível transfiguração com a figura do Desejado ao fundo, no centro e num futuro de ciência-ficção ou análogo. Foi o período de ouro do nosso imperialismo imaginário e ao mesmo tempo a época áurea da sua transfiguração em termos de poesia. Quando se pensa que desta constelação fazem parte gente como Cesário, Nobre, Gomes Leal, Camilo Pessanha, Mário de Sá Carneiro, Pessoa e numa visão mais literal e camonianamente mimética toda uma série de autores que não têm mais seara a cultivar que o da nostalgia do século de ouro ou o omnismo serôdio por conta dela, tem-se uma ideia da extensão do único rizoma que estruturou o nosso inconsciente histórico, o nosso imaginário e o nosso inconsciente. Nós não temos outra pátria que a que o verbo camoniano

desenhou, pátria-casa e pátria-orbe, jogando nela sem cessar a nossa realidade e a nossa ficção.

Podia supor-se que no momento em que a ficção camoniana de nós mesmos perdesse toda a sua ancoragem num mínimo de realidade, em suma, quando o nosso império meio fictício sempre, historicamente naufragasse toda a visão camoniana desaparecesse como um fantasma ao romper da manhã. Que qualquer coisa mais dolorosa que Alcácer-Quibir não deixasse não apenas diminuídos em termos de política, da dimensão histórica com outrora, mas órfãos daquilo que graças aos *Lusiadas*, mesmo ancorado ao longe, nos dava a impressão de estar para sempre no mapa do mundo, na memória Ocidental e sobretudo na nossa como um navio que não pode afundar-se. Em suma, que, sem Império ficaríamos nus como antes de o ter. Na verdade, enquanto camoniano, enquanto memória e texto, o Império não podia ser perdido, só se perdêssemos ao mesmo tempo o texto que guarda essa memória e a renova.

Depois de Abril houve um momento em que para suportar a nossa nova existência sem dimensão imperial – mesmo factícia ou fictícia – muitos pensaram que se devia deixar ao tempo o que o tempo tão cruamente desmentia. Que o nosso sonho imperial era a raiz e a causa do último desastre. E era. A nossa última veleidade imperial por conta de um império sem futuro fizera-se ainda com estrofes lembradas da história paradigmática do Oriente. Dupla ficção só o esquecimento do objecto do delito ou a fonte longínqua das nossas obras imperiais nos poderia conciliar conosco mesmos. Para sofrer menos com o fim das nossas ilusões imperiais por conta de um imperialismo subalterno devíamos abandonar de vez, como em 1898 propuseram os intelectuais espanhóis em relação ao Cide e suas glórias fora do tempo e da vida, uns *Lusiadas* que já não eram nossos contemporâneos e, sobretudo, nós contemporâneos deles.

Assim foi feito. Era mais fácil ajustar contas com a nossa má leitura de nós mesmos de que Camões seria o máximo culpado, do que conosco mesmos como história, vida presente, desafio futuro e do futuro. O eclipse do discurso camoniano durou pouco e no pouco que durou só para alguns essa estratégia de desiludidos da História teve alguma serventia. Nem a duvidosa subtileza de substituir o texto realista e crítico da *Peregrinação* ao texto onírico e sublimado de *Os Lusiadas* sentiu qualquer efeito, sal fatal de continuarmos navegando nas mesmas águas imperiais, decididamente inesgotáveis, por conta própria de aventureiros sem muita lei nem rei, em vez da heráldica Fé e Império. Breve se percebeu que eram ambos filhos da mesma História e do

mesmo tempo nos dera uma dimensão que mesmo perdida não podia ser amputada sem nos perder de vez da mesma História e do tempo que está nela e a ela se não resume.

É extraordinário que em 1974/5 tenhamos abandonado um Império com insólito ou aparente desprendimento. Como se nunca o tivéssemos tido. Sem sequer um olhar melancólico como o do Rei Boabdil abandonando Granada. E muito menos com remorso ou pânico como as Filhas de Lot sem se voltar para o passado. Mas tudo isto foi só a última comédia da representação nossa no teatro fechado do Império. Alguns de nós sabíamos que as partes do Oriente e as partes de África, que tão pouco melodramaticamente Helder Macedo evocaria a título póstumo e intemporal, continuariam no papel e no sítio onde estiveram quando elas pareciam nossas e, sobretudo, nós delas. São o nosso único Quinto Império. E passaremos muitos anos, muitos séculos talvez como Deucalião, deitando para as nossas costas, como ossos à espera da ressurreição, os mil pedaços pelo mundo agora definitivamente repartidos, desse Império perdido e sem perdição possível porque ficou inscrito num só livro mas no nosso imaginário.

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Eduardo Lourenço é o mais influente ensaísta português da actualidade. Publicou *Heterodoxia I* (1949) e *Pessoa Revisitado* (1973); o seu último livro e o primeiro em inglês surgiu recentemente, *Chaos and Splendor and Other Essays* (2002).

Lusotropical Romance: Camões, Gilberto Freyre, and the Isle of Love

Anna Klobucka

Abstract. Gilberto Freyre's doctrine of Lusotropicalism, arguably the most influential of twentieth-century discourses legitimizing the survival of the Portuguese empire, was rooted to a significant degree in a foundational fantasy of erotic encounter between white explorers and Asian or African women. In this fantasy, regularly reiterated in Freyre's writings, the figure of Camões came to play an increasingly prominent role. The "Isle of Love" episode of *The Lusiads* may be read as an implicit antecedent of Freyre's insistence on amorous underpinnings of the Lusotropical continuum. The narrative sequence of cantos nine and ten, in which sexual coupling between Gama's sailors and the nymphs inhabiting the island is followed by a collective marriage ceremony (and culminates in a prophecy of Portuguese imperial greatness) is shown to reverberate in the unresolved contradiction of Freyre's argument, with its simultaneous endorsement of the colonial contract viewed as a monogamous conjugal union and as polygamous multiplication of procreative opportunity.

The doctrine of Lusotropicalism, formulated by the Brazilian sociologist and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre, was arguably the most influential of twentieth-century discourses buttressing and legitimizing the continuing survival of the Portuguese colonial empire. Its basic premise was first sketched out by Freyre in the early nineteen-thirties, in his groundbreaking account of the formation of the Brazilian society, *Casa Grande e Senzala* (translated into English in 1946 as *The Masters and the Slaves*), where he diagnosed the "singular disposição do português para a colonização híbrida e escravocrata dos

trópicos,” to be explained in large part by “seu passado étnico, ou antes cultural, de povo indefinido entre a Europa e a África” (5). This inherently bicultural and consequently xenophilic spirit of the nation would literally become flesh through the generalized and generally accepted practice of miscegenation, touted by Freyre as the defining aspect of Portuguese colonial expansion and the foundation of its unique historical destiny. The kinder, gentler nature of Portuguese colonialism manifested itself most symptomatically, according to Freyre, through a preponderance of allegedly reciprocal claims of love and desire over unilateral demands of domination and servitude.¹

Lusotropicalism did not emerge as a comprehensive construct until two decades later, in the aftermath of Freyre’s grand tour throughout Portugal and its overseas colonies, undertaken at the invitation of Salazar’s regime and interpreted in two books Freyre published in 1953, *Um brasileiro em terras portuguesas*, a collection of lectures, and *Aventura e rotina*, a diary of the voyage. Less than a decade later, the Lusotropicalist doctrine received its definitive form with the publication of *O Luso e o Trópico*, a volume whose edition was sponsored by the Portuguese government and which appeared simultaneously in Portuguese, French and English (as *The Portuguese and the Tropics*). Occurring at the time when the European colonial powers were rapidly disinvesting themselves of their overseas possessions, the international dissemination of Freyre’s doctrine was meant to support Portugal’s continuing claim to its colonies by arguing for the profoundly transculturated, to the point of becoming organically hybrid, character of Portuguese presence in “the tropics.”

In Freyre’s ongoing engagement with the problematics of Portuguese expansion throughout the Southern hemisphere, the figure of Camões and the master narrative of his epic poem occupy an increasingly significant role. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that in spite of coming from a lineage of Camões aficionados—as he reports, both his grandfather and his father were able to recite *The Lusiads* from memory almost in its entirety (*Aventura e rotina* 115)—Freyre’s recognition of Camões’s relevance in the context of his own interpretation was slow and rather grudging in coming. It is surprising to note how scarce the references to Camões are in *Aventura e rotina* and *Um brasileiro em terras portuguesas*, particularly if we observe that cultural and literary name dropping is one of recurrent traits of Freyre’s narrative. Commenting on the superior ability to produce visually vivid representations of objects, landscapes, and human and animal figures that he has discerned

in Portuguese writers from the Middle Ages to his own time, Freyre cites, in a single breath, Fernão Lopes, Fernão Mendes Pinto, Gomes Eanes Azurara, Gaspar Correia, João de Barros, Almeida Garrett, Eça de Queirós, Oliveira Martins, Ramalho Ortigão, Fialho de Almeida, Raul Brandão, and Alexandre Herculano—but not Camões, an omission that would be curious under any circumstances, but which becomes glaring in the light of Freyre's later enshrinement of the poet in the Lusotropical pantheon assembled in *O Luso e o Trópico* (*Aventura e rotina* 39). A tentative explanation of this initial resistance to Camões may be extrapolated from a passing comment contrasting the poet's legacy with that of Mendes Pinto, where the latter is said to be a bearer of "valor literário de sentido universal" while the former is described as "prejudicado por excessivo nacionalismo" (*Um brasileiro* 78).² In fact, not until Freyre's doctrine becomes largely coopted by the propaganda apparatus of the Estado Novo—not until, with the publication of *O Luso e o Trópico*, it is effectively refashioned into a political instrument of Portuguese nationalism—is Camões granted a prominent place in Freyre's canon of exemplary figures of Lusotropicalism.

Having received an entire chapter to himself in *O Luso e o Trópico*, Camões became also a recurrent feature in Freyre's repertoire of occasional lecture topics, all the way to a curious intervention dating from 1984, in which the sixteenth-century poet appears as a prefiguration of the modern cultural anthropologist (*Camões: Vocação de Antropólogo Moderno?*). Published by the Conselho da Comunidade Portuguesa (an association of Portuguese immigrants) of the state of São Paulo, the lecture had been delivered in the context of the celebrations of the Portuguese national holiday, Dia de Portugal, and its overarching significance is made explicit by the introductory remarks proffered by Freyre's hosts and also reproduced in the brochure: Camões, the greatest poet of the Portuguese language, who gave the Portuguese people "a consciência que temos de nós mesmos como gente e como cultura," is the subject of intellectual reflection by "a autoridade maior na interpretação do mundo que o português criou" (no page numbers). Freyre is thus presented as carrying on Camões's legacy along a metonymic continuum of Portuguese-ness, while the lecture itself establishes a complementary metaphoric analogy based on the disciplinary mission of modern anthropology, which the poet is said to have anticipated.³ It is in this late reappraisal of Camões and of anthropology, as well as, indirectly, of the aesthetic and ideological ramifications of Lusotropicalism, that Freyre draws the

most explicit link between what he calls “aspectos colectivamente positivos” of eroticism and sexuality “significativamente presentes” in *The Lusiads* and his own sociological endorsement, in *Casa Grande e Senzala*, of polygamous practices of Brazilian slaveholders, those—in the words of Freyre’s lecture—“donjuans de bonitas mulheres afro-negras das senzalas ou agrestemente ameríndias, [que] contribuíram, desde os primeiros tempos da colonização portuguesa do Brasil, para desfibrar antagonismos, quer de classe, quer de raça, entre senhores e escravos, e aproximar esses extremos, ou contrários, antropológicos, através de mestiços, filhos de amores sem barreiras.” To sum up the significance of Freyre’s remarks, in the eighty-four year old anthropologist’s scholarly hindsight, his own account of the formation of the Brazilian society—of which Lusotropicalism was to become a lateral offspring—locates its paradigmatic source in the unrestrained, collective practice of male sexual license, as represented in Camões’s epic. In other words, Lusotropicalism begins on the Isle of Love.

To be sure, Freyre himself never engages directly with the Isle of Love episode of *The Lusiads*; nearly all his references to eroticism and, specifically, to sexual encounters between Portuguese men and African or Asian women in the context of his discussion of Camões are referenced in an oblique fashion, both in the 1984 lecture and in Freyre’s earlier writings; and if any objective correlative of the writer’s recurrent emphasis may be discerned in his comments, that correlative is less Camões the author of *The Lusiads* than Camões the man and his alleged amorous exploits as one of those overseas explorers who acted as “descobridores não só com os olhos, mas com os sexos” (Camões). At the same time, the continuity postulated by Freyre, if it is to be taken at all seriously, makes no sense *except* in the context of the cantos in which Gama’s sailors mate with the nymphs inhabiting an enchanting floating island, whose identification as “willing native girls in a thin mythological disguise” (Quint 119) is as self-evident to a contemporary postcolonial critic as it would have been virtually impossible to articulate for a reader—like Freyre—whose horizon of expectation was informed and circumscribed by the normative canon of traditional Camões scholarship. What matters here is that the sixteenth-century literary fiction of the Isle of Love and the twentieth-century pseudo-scientific doctrine of Lusotropicalism are linked by a steady stream of discourses focused on the articulation of national identity, in which the innate tendency of Portuguese men toward sexual *hybris* emerges as a leading factor in the construction and preservation of the empire, as well

as a significant *moral* justification of Portuguese imperial claims. As Miguel Vale de Almeida has pointed out, Freyre's interpretation of Portuguese culture coincided in a particularly felicitous manner with preexisting (as well as subsequent) representations of national identity, "feitas em Portugal pelas ciências sociais e pela literatura, por discursos oficiais *e pelo senso comum das autorepresentações identitárias*, com espantosa resiliência e adaptabilidade a conjunturas ideológicas e políticas diferentes" (2000, 164; original emphasis). To give but one example, a paradigmatic twentieth-century summary of Portuguese identity (to this day reproduced in mass-market editions), Jorge Dias's 1950 lecture "Os Elementos Fundamentais da Cultura Portuguesa," posits the interrelated triad of "[a] capacidade de adaptação, a simpatia humana e o temperamento amoroso" as "a chave da colonização portuguesa" (53). In this context, the relationship, postulated by Freyre himself, between representations of sexuality in *The Lusiads* and the sexual foundations of Lusotropicalism emerges as anything but arbitrary. Consequently, as I will argue, to review and reconsider what happens in Camões's poem when Gama and his men disembark on the Isle of Love can go a long way toward illuminating the genealogy—understood as both origin and chain of reproduction—of colonial, as well as post-colonial, discourses of Portuguese exceptionalism.

The Isle of Love episode of *The Lusiads* occupies a considerable portion—altogether, 220 stanzas—of the last two cantos of the poem. It is conceived by Venus, protectress of the Portuguese, as a pleasurable interlude in Gama's sailors' weary progress, a haven of "algum deleite, algum descanso ... algum repouso" (IX, 19-20), in which to restore their strength and reward them for their exploits. The island is therefore populated by lovely sea nymphs and Cupid's help is enlisted in order to make these mythical sex workers unambiguously and eagerly responsive to the Portuguese—"pera com mais vontade trabalharem"—as Camões also quite unambiguously puts it (IX, 22). Since even Cupid's arrows may fail to inspire sufficient amorous ardor, a public relations specialist—the goddess Fame—is brought in to reinforce their effect on the nymphs by singing praises of the soon-to-arrive explorers (IX, 45-46). The island itself is depicted as a heavily eroticized *locus amoenus*, which overflows with lasciviously splitting pomegranates and lemons that "cheirando / Estão virgíneas tetas imitando" (IX, 56). Instructed by Venus on how best to stimulate the sailors' lust, the nymphs present themselves to the disembarking Portuguese in a variety of provocative poses—lounging naked in shallow waters, shedding flimsy garments while pretending to flee through the

woods—and a generalized orgy follows readily enough, rendered by the poet in much luscious detail for the benefit of the otherwise excluded reader, since “Milhor é esprimentá-lo que julgá-lo; / mas julgue-o quem não pode esprimentá-lo” (IX, 83). Somewhat abruptly for the thus entranced reader—although quite logically in a broader scheme of things—the focus of the narrative then cuts directly from visions of sexual excess to a collective marriage ceremony: “com palavras formais e estipulantes,” the nymphs become the sailors’ lawful wedded spouses, the couples vowing each other “eterna companhia / Em vida e morte, de honra e alegria” (IX, 84). Afterwards, there is plenty of fine wining, dining and musical entertainment, which segues into a lengthy exposé of future military exploits awaiting the Portuguese in the Orient, always to be followed, for successive generations of heroic conquerors, by a restorative sojourn on the Isle of Love (X, 73). Finally, a second vision of the empire to come, framed by the Ptolemaic model of the universe, is revealed to Gama by his own mythical consort, the sea goddess Tethys.

Many early and not so early commentators of *The Lusiads* sought to explicate the episode in historicist and biographic terms, identifying a number of possible prototypes of Camões’s enchanted island, among them the island of Bombay, also referred to tellingly as “the Island of Good Life” (Ilha da Boa Vida) by its sixteenth-century Portuguese visitors who included the poet himself.⁴ Sexual and gastronomical indulgence of Gama’s sailors was therefore claimed to represent actual experiences of Europeans in India. Others, such as Vítor Manuel Aguiar e Silva, castigated those referentially minded readers for their naiveté, insisting on a purely or predominantly allegorical interpretation of the sequence. According to the critic, to insist on identifying geographic and/or biographic sources of the Isle of Love amounts to a “grosseiro erro de teoria literária, que impossibilita depois qualquer exegese aceitável do texto poético em causa,” since the immanent significance of the literary text is unassimilable to an external context of reference (133). In fact, to speak of real islands, real sailors, and real women as somehow meaningfully implicated in the events transpiring on Camões’s mythical island is not merely a fallacy that discredits the interpreter’s disciplinary credentials: it makes proper, that is symbolic, interpretation “radicalmente impossível” (133). The militant tone of the introductory paragraphs of Aguiar e Silva’s essay, with their hyperbolic condemnation of historicist and biographic fallacies at work in traditional criticism of Camões and their manifesto-like imposition of the theoretically necessary distinction between “o funcionamento técnico-semân-

tico do discurso poético” and “o funcionamento técnico-semântico do discurso não-poético,” is explicable largely by the historical context of its original publication in 1972, the glory days of High Structuralism, which, however, had yet to make a dent in the canonical edifice of Camões scholarship. Notwithstanding its dated rhetoric, however, the critic’s central claim—that what happens on the Isle of Love is of entirely allegorical nature and that to postulate any sort of interplay between the fantastic events and the historical reality of Gama’s voyage is at best dangerously naïve—appears to remain well entrenched in the contemporary critical understanding of the episode.

Therefore, while Aguiar e Silva’s objections are of a (dated) theoretical order, their more general implications are anything but. To opt for an exclusively allegorical reading of the episode, while at the same time rejecting the entire dimension of external reference as not only irrelevant but in fact deleterious to the task of interpretation, makes it difficult if not impossible to postulate any kind of meaningful relationship between the events of the last two cantos of Camões’s poem and the historical enterprise of exploration and empire-building carried out by the Portuguese; it effectively severs the Isle of Love sequence from the rest of the poem and splits the episode itself into two poorly fitting halves, representing respectively the (redundant if pleasing) entertainment of the body and the (relevant if plodding) edification of the mind. The severely crippling implications of the either/or interpretive framing recall hermeneutic history of such texts as, most prominently, the *Song of Songs*; however, if profane and religious readings of the biblical poem have indeed been viewed as mutually exclusive, it is because they spring from incompatible contexts of interpretation. It is only if we read *The Lusiads* religiously—not as a sacred text per se, but as a text that sends transcendent messages to the faithful—that we must struggle to accommodate (or bypass, or deny) the direct and literal appeal of its pornographic sequences. It is significant that Gilberto Freyre, who read Camões and other texts and figures of Portuguese overseas expansion from the unique perspective of a Brazilian anthropologist in the process of articulating what Vale de Almeida has referred to as “premature post-colonial discourse” of Lusotropicalism (Almeida 2001), and who explained his early resistance to Camões’s epic by commenting on the poet’s “excessive nationalism” (*Um brasileiro* 78), had no trouble whatsoever integrating sex with symbolism in his own conceptual framework.⁵

Thus, while I take under advisement Aguiar e Silva’s stern warnings against the “mais grave falta” (138) of failing to foreground the symbolic dimension of the episode, I find it difficult to get around the order of priorities accord-

ing to which the travelers' needs are satisfied on the Isle of Love: sex first, food and drink second, sublime prophecy last. I would argue that Voltaire was quite correct indeed in describing the island's atmosphere as resembling that of an Amsterdam *musico*—a kind of musical theater that functioned also as a brothel—and in mistrusting Camões's suddenly virtuous roundabout in stanza 89, with its insistence on the allegorical nature of the episode's physical trappings (228).⁶ It is, after all, the poem itself that insists on the *reality* of the nymphs: Veloso's instigation to his companions—"Sigamos estas deusas, e vejamos / Se fantásticas são, se verdadeiras" (IX, 70) can, in the context, be translated pragmatically as "let's see if they are real enough to be screwed." By having sex with the nereids, the sailors prove them real.

It is true, of course, that less than twenty stanzas later the poet declares the island and its captivating inhabitants to be nothing but "as deleitosas / Honras que a vida fazem sublimada" (IX, 89):

Aquelas preminências gloriosas,
Os triunfos, a fronte coroadas
De palma e louro, a glória e maravilha:
Estes são os deleites desta Ilha.

There is, however, an alternative way of reading this disclaimer without, at the same time, accepting what it seems to impose on the reader, a wholesale dismissal of the pagan sexual fantasy as a mere disguise of the true purpose of the poem.⁷ It could be claimed that at least in one important sense Camões does establish a causal, metonymic link—rather than a mutually exclusive allegorical opposition—between sexual release and the rewards of a well-lived and virtuous life that are exalted in stanzas 88-91 of the ninth canto. The use that the poet makes of the myth of Acteon—its admonitory function in the context of King Sebastian's excessive preoccupation with hunting, lack of interest in the female sex and consequent failure to produce an heir to the endangered Portuguese throne—have been amply discussed by the critics, beginning with Faria e Sousa in the seventeenth century (Aguiar e Silva 155-62). As Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval argues, Sebastian must therefore be led to understand not only the futility of the hunt for beasts, but also the pleasures and the rewards of the hunt for women that displaces and surpasses Acteon's misdirected pursuit on the Isle of Love (6). As they disembark on the island, Gama's sailors initially expect and hope to be able to pursue and kill

wild animals (“caça agreste”); instead they are presented with a prey that is both gentler and easier to capture (“Caça ... / Tão suave, doméstica e benina”) (IX, 66). What is more, the hunt for the nymphs, the “caça estranha” of Veloso’s exclamation (IX, 69), yields ultimately far greater benefits than any hunt for beasts could have done, since in this episode of *The Lusíads* the satisfaction of physical desires is followed by spiritual fulfillment of the highest, apothecotic order. The pedagogical dimension of the episode, in which Sebastian is posited as the implied reader of the distich that sums up the stanzas describing the sexual congress between the sailors and the nymphs—“Milhor é esprimentá-lo que julgá-lo; / mas julgue-o quem não pode esprimentá-lo” (IX, 83) (Jiménez-Sandoval 8)—illuminates from a different angle the relationship between enthusiastic engagement in heterosexual sex and the ample rewards of a virtuous life that Camões expresses in apparently allegorical terms in stanza 89. The “delights of this Isle” are not *either* carnal *or* moral, but rather *both* carnal *and* moral, since realizing carnal desire in the ways exhibited in the episode would be, for Sebastian, the morally correct course of action. Furthermore, such a reading creates a context in which the rather abrupt transition from sex to marriage in stanza 84, however awkward from the point of view of composition, figures as a necessary next step—and one better taken as fast as possible—in the development of the sequence. It is not enough for Sebastian to simply start chasing women, spurned on by the pornographic appeal of the Isle of Love, since it is only through matrimony and the production of legitimate offspring that he can fulfill his royal mission of preserving and extending the Portuguese kingdom.

To tear Sebastian away from the state in which “ninguém ama o que deve, / Senão o que somente mal deseja” (IX, 29) is, however, the overriding priority, and pornographic representation is summoned by Camões to play one of its traditional roles, that of promoting proper sexual development of the young male. In effect, the Isle of Love is designed by Venus and described by the poet as a perfect *pornotopia*, a term proposed in Steven Marcus’s account of sexuality and pornography in mid-nineteenth-century England, *The Other Victorians*: a utopian fantasy in which representation of external reality is relevant only insofar as it sets the stage for and encourages sexual commerce, just as the heavily eroticized descriptions of the lush vegetation covering the Isle of Love prefigure the orgy that is to take place in its midst. It does not come as a surprise that Sir Richard Burton, a naughty Victorian in his own right, who, in addition to his many other literary and existential exploits,

produced several volumes of translations of Asian erotic literature, including the first English version of the *Kama Sutra*, should express his highest appreciation for Camões's skill in crafting the episode. Having declared it "a triumph of genius and art, of tact and taste, of glowing language and of suggestive delicacy," Burton defended his decision to "[render] every line literally" in his translation of the ninth canto of *The Lusiads* by declaring that "only false shame and mock modesty" could give rise to objections formulated on moral grounds (II, 653).⁸

Camões's island differs, however, from more orthodox examples of pornographic fiction in that its delights are not self-enclosed and its finality is not purely, or even primarily, masturbatory (although it certainly has been viewed as such by generations of prurient educators and inquisitive schoolchildren). Indeed, it is not inaccurate to declare that on the Isle of Love Gama's *barões assinalados* "alcançam o apogeu da sua ascensão divinificatória" upon completing "um dos grandes ciclos ... da missão ecuménica do povo português" (Aguilar e Silva 139). It needs to be recognized, however, at the same time, that raw, realistic sex, followed by the exchange of marital vows that can only be taken seriously in "symbolic" terms, followed by the prophetic glorification of Portuguese imperial claims, are strung together in Camões's narrative in a sequence that is neither disarticulated nor arbitrary. Its pedagogical significance, motivated by the desire to preserve the kingdom through educating King Sebastian in the art of "desiring well" and focused on the vertical or temporal continuation of Portugal is but one face of the coin; the other relates to horizontal or spatial propagation of the realm through imperial expansion. As a metaphorically transfigured representation of encounter and its consequences, the Isle of Love may lack the forceful intelligibility that the Adamastor episode has acquired for postcolonial critics; but what it lacks in (relative) transparency, it more than makes up for in its exuberant and equivocal complexity.⁹

The Lusiads tells several stories of encounter in two distinct registers: as historical narrative chronicling Gama's fleet's confrontations with actual Africans, Moors, and Indians, and as hallucinatory invention. In the former register, nearly all exchanges, collisions and alliances occur between men, and men only (with one significant exception, to which I will return). No scantily attired native girls promenading on the beach, in the manner of Pero Vaz de Caminha's inaugural account of the Portuguese arrival in Brazil, are to be found in Camões's poem; indeed, the only substantial collective representa-

tion of women on the shore that the poem affords us prior to the fleet's arrival at the Isle of Love is that of the tearful "Mães, Esposas, Irmãs" (IV, 89) who accompany the sailors' departure from the Restelo pier on the outskirts of Lisbon. By contrast, the two enactments of encounter-as-fantasy—the episode of Adamastor and the fleet's sojourn on the Isle of Love—are both stories of sexual desire, of male-female interaction in the liminal and unstable space of the shoreline, and of respectively dystopian and utopian imagined consequences of erotic commerce. Occurring, at the level of plot if not at that of discourse, at the beginning and at the end of Gama's foray into the Indian Ocean, they frame the central account of the poem both structurally and symbolically. The specular relationship between the two episodes has been discussed in some detail in recent studies by Fernando Gil and David Quint, both of which have pointed to its contrastive and compensatory nature: as Quint puts it, "in the symbolic economy of the poem, Adamastor's loss looks very much like da Gama's gain ... the Portuguese get the girls, and consummate fame and power, while the enemy monster is consumed with frustration" (119-20). The two episodes function therefore as intimately interdependent facets of a foundational romance that anticipates and prefigures the centuries-long imperial marriage between the Portuguese and the tropics.

The metaphor of marriage is precisely the figure that structures Gilberto Freyre's differential description of Lusotropical colonization in *O Luso e o Trópico*. While other Europeans contracted "casamentos só de conveniência" with tropical territories and their inhabitants, unions motivated exclusively by economic interest and never by love, the Portuguese, by contrast, espoused the tropics through a unique configuration of "conveniência completada pelo amor" (50). As Freyre hastens to add,

Não tem deixado de haver drama, conflito, dor, angústia, sofrimento em tais encontros. Mas raramente lhes tem faltado amor: amor de homem a mulher de cor e amor de homem a terra quente, para amortecer, dulcificar asperezas, em choques de interesses que a pura conveniência, mesmo quando mútua, dificilmente evita ou sequer amacia, nas relações entre grupos humanos, nisto parecidas com as relações entre indivíduos. (50)

Freyre, of course, did not address directly the political context in which his remarks were being widely publicized by the Salazar regime, but the inescapable implication of his arguments was that it is the Portuguese and the

Portuguese alone who had deserved to avoid the traumatic experience of being forced to divorce their colonial consorts, even as the wave of decolonization kept spreading throughout Asia and Africa. It needs to be noted as well that Freyre's rhetorical insistence on viewing colonial dominance as akin to the institution of monogamous (patriarchal) marriage—be it “completed by love,” as in the Portuguese case, or merely convenient—clashes in his work at large with similarly recurrent articulation of the Lusotropical relationship as a polygamous amplification of procreative opportunity, in which the Portuguese male's “corpo de macho vigoroso” becomes multiplied “em corpos pardos, roxos, amarelos, morenos, no Oriente, nas Áfricas, na América” (*Um brasileiro* 21). This particular unresolved contradiction, while hardly original enough in the context of Western colonial expansion to warrant a search for nationally specific precedents, may indeed be also traced back to *The Lusiads*, thus thickening the web of correspondences between Camões's epic of poetic discovery and Freyre's epic of anthropological consolidation.

Similarly to the marriage between the Portuguese and the tropics, as imagined by Freyre, the hyperbolically positive experience of Gama's sailors on the Isle of Love is also achieved through a confluence of love and convenience, or, more precisely, of sexual fulfillment and contractual guarantee of future material benefits that their conjugal union with the island's inhabitants is expected to bring. Needless to say, the context in which such unproblematic symbiosis is made possible emerges in Camões's epic as an absolute utopia, a tropical *locus amoenus* to Adamastor's also tropical *locus horribilis*. In the fantasy of conquest staged on the Isle of Love, even the greatest loser—Leonardo—gets the girl, and with her an equal share of the spoils (since the nymphs are all *equally* desirable, all *incomparably* beautiful). As a utopian alternative to Adamastor, the Isle of Love does not, however, altogether suppress the signs of what it must exclude in order to salvage the plausibility of its scenario. The trick that Venus, with Cupid's assistance, plays on the nymphs in order to make them willing and eager sexual partners of the Portuguese is explicitly presented as a reenactment of her intervention in the *Aeneid*, where she makes Dido fall in love with Aeneas (IX, 23). The tragic downfall of the betrayed Dido and the curse she utters before her suicide, that dark alternative to Jupiter's prophecy of Roman greatness, are reenacted in *The Lusiads*, as Quint has argued, through the spurned Adamastor's dire prophecy.¹⁰ Dido's reemergence—or, rather, her only explicit emergence in

The Lusíads—in the stanzas leading up to the creation of the Isle of Love, as a prototype of intentionally engineered female responsiveness to conquering heroes of the empire, is just as significant. It reinforces the contrastive linkage between the two episodes and it surrounds the island with shadows of its other epic antecedents: the Homeric islands of Circe and Calypso and the island of Lemnos in *Argonautica*, all spaces of amorous encounter between questing navigators and island-bound women. It is through a comparative reading of these cognate narratives that the uniqueness of Camões's Isle of Love truly stands out. *Nothing goes wrong there*, not just for the sailors but also, much more astonishingly, for the women: instead of being left behind on the shore, as mythical tradition mandates, be it to kill themselves, to bear the visitors' offspring or merely to remain forever pining for the fleeting grace of their presence, not only do they become legitimate spouses of the Portuguese; they actually get to sail away with them on their ships. In other words, like in Gilberto Freyre's idealized account of love thriving in servitude and imperial domination springing naturally and innocently from the amorous thrall in which the tropics hold the Portuguese, in the Isle of Love scenario it is possible to keep the cake and eat it too, to reconcile incompatible claims and blend fantasy and history into a smooth flow of poetic narrative.¹¹ It is presumably in the blank space between the stanza 143 of the tenth canto, where the departure of the sailors and the nymphs from the island is described, and the following stanza 144, where Gama's men return to their Portuguese homeland, that the reader is expected, albeit with no help from the poet, to fall out of allegory and back into history. Otherwise, if we prove too slow or too literal-minded to negotiate the abruptly shifting planes of mythological and historical representation, we become confronted with the potential embarrassment of an imagined encounter between Venus's lovely creatures and the Portuguese spouses of the sailors, whose tearful farewell we had witnessed a few cantos earlier in the poem. Centuries later, this contradiction—unacknowledged yet too prominent to be ignored—resurfaces, in Freyre's writings on Portuguese integration in the tropics, as a similarly equivocal tension between the competing rhetorics of polygamous proliferation of sexual opportunity and monogamous exclusiveness of the marital contract. The fact that in Camões's poem these apparently irreconcilable commitments are contracted within distinct realms of literary representation makes it possible to configure them as materially and ethically compatible, as indeed they were by and large held to be in the historical practice of Western colonial expansion.

Between the wives of the Restelo pier and the wives of the Isle of Love, one other spousal figure stands out in the ample space that *The Lusíads* devotes to narratives of the Portuguese encounter with the tropics. It is significant that the woeful tale of Leonor de Sá, the wife of Manuel de Sepúlveda and his companion in the disaster of shipwreck and their subsequent trek through the “terreno ... duro e irado” (V, 46) of African wilderness, is told by monstrous Adamastor, since they are both “figures of death caused by desire” (Blackmore 22). And if the defeat of Adamastor’s amorous claims is inversely reflected in Gama’s sailors’ sexual conquest of the Isle of Love, so does the fate suffered by Leonor at the hands of “Cafres, ásperos e avaros” who “tira[m] à linda dama seus vestidos” (V, 47) prefigure darkly the strip-teasing maneuvers of the nymphs pretending to flee from their lustful pursuers (Blackmore 131n33). With remarkable economy, the story of hapless Leonor as told by the equally hapless Adamastor points to a double exclusion from the allegedly reciprocal “marriage of love and convenience” between the Portuguese and the tropics, whose utopian projection in the Isle of Love episode reverberates in Freyre’s late imperial doctrine: while sexual claims of African men on white women’s bodies are deemed monstrous to behold, neither do white women—or, more accurately, white Portuguese wives—partake of the erotic paradise that, by the grace of friendly gods, is to forever await Portuguese men who venture below the equator.

If, in the mythosymbolic geography of *The Lusíads*, Adamastor may be said to represent Africa and India stands for itself in the narrative of Gama’s negotiations with the Malabar ruler, the magical, floating Isle of Love emerges as a space yet to be invented, a space of prophecy, foundation of the future (Gil 70). Its unstable coordinates betray marked affinity not only with Freyre’s Lusotropical continuum, but also with such more recent fictional constructs as José Saramago’s “stone raft,” the unmoored Iberian Peninsula whose geopolitical destiny remains to be determined as Saramago’s novel comes to an end, but whose story achieves narrative closure by way of transforming the drifting island into a sort of sexual and procreative utopia. Then there are newer, more unorthodox appropriations, such as the composition on the theme of the Isle of Love, written by Gina Martins, a Portuguese high school student from Tavira, and posted on a web site sponsored by the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. In Martins’s essay, an all-female group of contemporary adolescents, traveling in a time machine, goes on a school trip to Camões’s island; significantly, the only two boys in their class are not allowed

to come along. On the island, the girls are received by a cortege of naked, handsome, muscular—and Portuguese-speaking—male nymphs (“ninfos”); as the author speculates, they are none other than the island’s original visitors who received the gift of immortality and eternal youth from the nereids and who have now taken the place of their mythical consorts in order to offer a proper welcome to the young Portuguese women who arrive at the island. Where Saramago’s *The Stone Raft*, with its floating, amorously charged Peninsula, inscribes its postcolonial version of Camões’s sexual paradise within the confines of the Iberian homeland, Martins’s reenactment of the Isle of Love encounter, albeit quite differently configured owing to its feminist motivation, may likewise be read as a post-imperial reclaiming of national endogamy and therefore, even more clearly than *The Stone Raft*, as a product of the post-Freyrian age in Lusotopian imagination. In any case, if Saramago’s “Peninsula of Love” and Martins’s twenty-first century cyber-counterclaim to the distribution of post-imperial spoils are any indication, sex, fantasy, and historical entitlement are likely to continue to mix in fruitful and unpredictable ways in the space opened up by this notorious episode of *The Lusiads*.

Notes

¹ For a recent, comprehensive reevaluation of the historical relationship between Freyre’s doctrine of Lusotropicalism and the colonial ideology of the Portuguese Estado Novo, see Castelo 1998.

² A further comment by Freyre fleshes out the contrastive juxtaposition of the two writers in more elaborate terms and is worth quoting in its entirety: “Críticos autorizados de hoje chegam a considerá-lo [Fernão Mendes Pinto] mais humano e mais universal, pelo interesse que desperta em todos os homens e não apenas nos portugueses, do que o próprio Camões, talvez demasiadamente nacionalista no seu lusismo e demasiadamente político no seu nacionalismo, embora fosse já um lusismo colorido pela sensibilidade ao trópico e pelo amor à mulher escura” (*Um brasileiro* 137). Symptomatically, Camões’s alleged interracial amorous exploits become, for Freyre, the main redeeming feature that can help counterbalance the “excessive nationalism” of the poet’s political discourse.

³ Freyre’s rambling, in many respects anachronistic, but at the same time fascinating appreciation of Camões the anthropologist would merit a more attentive critical reading than is possible here. Ulla Link-Heer offers such a reading, albeit based on a 1990 French translation by René Goudic, in which Freyre’s text was presented as undated and previously unpublished (“Camões, un anthropologue moderne? Un inédit de Gilberto Freyre,” *Internationale de l’Imaginaire* 14 [1990], 221–61). It is worth noting that the relationship between the introductory remarks by the organizers of the Dia de Portugal festivities and the lecture that those comments frame and qualify extends well into the postcolonial time and space the often less than perfectly harmonious convergence between Freyre’s Lusotropical doctrine and the imperial claims of Salazar’s regime.

⁴ A useful although highly argumentative synthesis of the "referential" strain in the critical fortune of the episode may be found in Vítor Manuel Aguiar e Silva's essay "Função e significado do episódio da 'Ilha do Amores' na estrutura de *Os Lusíadas*" (*Camões* 131-33).

⁵ In addition to Freyre's extraterritorial, so to speak, relationship with *The Lusíads*, and his consequent immunity to the poem's patriotic appeal, it is also important to take into account, following Vale de Almeida, the observation that the theme of male sexual prowess as a constructive factor of social and genealogical engineering is more commonly present in Brazilian discourses of self-representation than in their Portuguese equivalents (Almeida 2000, 169n6).

⁶ "Camões, après s'être abandonné sans réserve à la description voluptueuse de cette île, et des plaisirs où les Portugais sont plongés, s'avise d'informer le lecteur que toute cette fiction ne signifie autre chose que le plaisir qu'un honnête homme sent à faire son devoir. Mais il faut avouer qu'une île enchantée dont Vénus est la déesse, et où les nymphes caressent des matelots après un voyage de long cours, ressemble plus à un musico d'Amsterdam qu'à quelque chose d'honnête" (228).

⁷ A. Bartlett Giamatti considers at some length the allegorical transmutation of the Isle of Love, along with some of its interpretations by other critics, and concludes that the jarring effect of the poet's reversal of purpose in stanza 89 is characteristic of the "clumsy manner" in which Camões attempts to reconcile pagan and Christian values throughout the poem (224).

⁸ Burton's translation of the *Kama Sutra* (with Foster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot) strived to realize the same values of "delicacy and good taste" (*Camões* I, 45) that he praised in the erotic sequences of *The Lusíads*. As his biographer comments, "In translating the most explicit libidinal matters, Burton and Arbuthnot adroitly managed to escape the smell of obscenity. Their words were cool and delicate; they used the Hindu terms for the sexual organs, yoni and lingam, throughout" (Brodie 297).

⁹ Having asked rhetorically, "What does the figure [of Adamastor] stand for?", Lawrence Lipking offers the following succinct summary: "To twentieth-century readers, the answer has seemed irresistible. Adamastor is the Other; the dark, unconquerable continent; the victims of imperialism; the blacks who already inhabit the land but whom *The Lusíads* barely notices" (217). George Monteiro has described a number of South African literary appropriations of Camões's giant in the chapter "The Adamastor Story" of his book *The Presence of Camões*.

¹⁰ At a more immediate level, Adamastor is of course modeled upon Homer's and Virgil's depictions of the Cyclops Polyphemus. However, Camões drew as well on another literary tradition associated with Polyphemus in the writings of Theocritus, Virgil and Ovid: the giant's unrequited passion for the sea nymph Galatea. It is this latter version of Polyphemus that bears marked affinity with the story of Dido in the *Aeneid*, so much so that "Dido and Polyphemus had achieved a kind of reciprocity—between monstrous passion and passionate monster—in the classical literary tradition that informs Camões' fiction" (Quint 115).

¹¹ Helder Macedo comments on this aspect of the Isle of Love in pointing out that Camões's concept of love as capable of reconciling all differences "allows him to amplify epic celebration of imperial deeds which, by definition, presuppose the conquest of the other and obliteration of difference, into a qualitatively different celebration of what the epic quest should signify: the triumph of love on Venus's island, where all opposites are reconciled" (59).

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Leonard Bacon's Camões: "Five Years of Monomania"

George Monteiro

Abstract. The American poet Leonard Bacon (1887-1954) spent more than "five years of monomania" in research for an edition of *Os Lusíadas* in English translation. Published in 1950 by the Hispanic Society of America (and still in print), his version remains the only American translation of the Portuguese epic to date. Bacon also gave lectures on the subject of Camões at Harvard in 1947 and Berkeley in 1951, reviewed J. D. M. Ford's 1946 edition of *Os Lusíadas* and C. M. Bowra's book on the epic (focusing on his chapter on Camões), and published several fine sonnets on the subject of Camões. He also published "By the Rivers of Babylon," a translation of what he called "the most superb of all Camões's lyrical poems."

"1950 will be remembered as the year of the first American translation of Luís de Camões's national epic *Os Lusíadas*," predicted Gerald Moser. Of course he spoke to a specialized audience: the readership of *Hispania*, the journal published by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. "This verse translation," he continued, "was made by Leonard Bacon, Pulitzer-prize winning poet of Santa Barbara."¹ To this day Bacon's remains the only American translation, at least the only published one, of Camões's poem. Bacon's work is also, in the opinion of many, the poem's most satisfactory modern translation in English. Immediately upon its appearance the Harvard University scholar J. D. M. Ford, who in 1940 had published an edition of Sir Richard Fanshawe's seventeenth-century translation of *Os Lusíadas*, called it "by far the best poetical rendering of that epic

in our language.”² A half century later, in *From Dawn to Decadence* (2000), the historian Jacques Barzun recommended that of the existing translations of Camões’s *Os Lusíadas* into English “the one to read is Leonard Bacon’s, in verse.”³ Bacon’s translation is still in print.

Leonard Bacon (1887-1954) was born in town of Solvay, New York, near the city of Syracuse, but when he was eight years old family moved, in keeping with its New England roots, to Peace Dale, Rhode Island. His paternal grandfather, also named Leonard, had been a famous clergyman in New Haven, Connecticut. His mother was the granddaughter of Rowland G. Hazard, who achieved a modicum of fame as a philosopher. His great aunt was Delia Bacon, the vociferous champion of the theory that Francis Bacon was the actual author of the poetry and plays attributed to William Shakespeare. Developing his early bent for writing, Leonard Bacon served as co-editor of the *Yale Literary Magazine* while in college. In 1910 he went to the University of California to teach English. He stayed until 1923 when he gave up teaching to devote himself to his writing. He was a prolific writer, publishing numerous volumes of poetry, a good deal of prose in journals and magazines, and book length translations over a forty-five year period. His often satirical poems appeared in volumes titled *The Scannel Pipe* (1909), *The Banquet of the Poets* (1921), *Ulug Beg* (1923), *Ph.D.s: Male and Female Created He Them* (1925), *Animula Vagula* (1926), *Guinea Fowl and Other Poultry* (1927), *The Legend of Quincibald* (1928), *Lost Buffalo* (1930), *The Furioso* (1932), *Dream and Action* (1934), *The Voyage of Autoleon* (1935), *The Goose on the Capitol* (1936), *Rhyme and Punishment* (1936), *Bullinger Bound* (1938), and *Sunderland Capture* (1940). In 1939 he published *Semi-Centennial*, an autobiographical volume. His work in translation includes collaborations with George Rapall Noyes on *Heroic Ballads of Serbia* (1913) and with R. Selden Rose on *Poema de mio Cid* (1919), and, working alone, *The Song of Roland* (1914) and, of course, Camões’ *Os Lusíadas* (1950). He died on January 1, 1954, in Peace Dale, Rhode Island. At the time the *Atlantic Monthly* noted:

Leonard Bacon, friend and contributor, died on January 1. He graduated from Yale with his ambition, as he once said, “crystal clear. I knew I wanted to write poetry and nothing but poetry.” Thirty years later, after he had published several volumes and after his *Sunderland Capture* had been awarded the Pulitzer

Prize, he was still of the same mind. "Poetry," he said, "continues to be my blessing and my curse." Readers will miss his exuberance, his stalwart defense of the classics, his generosity, and his wit.⁴

Bacon's translation of *Os Lusíadas* was his last major publication in a long and productive career. Accompanying the poem are a twenty-page bio-critical introduction, detailed notes, and annotations placed at the end of each canto, "A Note on the Rivers of Babylon," along with his translation of Camões' poem expanding on the 137th Psalm, "Sobre os rios que vão." He also included a short essay titled "Camões and the History of Portugal." In its final form Bacon's edition profits a good deal from the work of his predecessors in the field, particularly Cecil Maurice Bowra (1898-1971) and Jeremiah Denis Matthias Ford (1873-1958), both of whom published important work on Camões in 1946 just months before Bacon tried out the first version of his translation of *Os Lusíadas* on trade publishers in New York.⁵ Bowra studied four literary epics (*From Virgil to Milton*) and Ford published a fully annotated edition of *Os Lusíadas*—the first of its kind in the United States.

Bacon wrote appreciative reviews of both publications for the *Saturday Review of Literature*. In "Epics, Oral and Written" Bacon spends almost half of his review praising Camões and his poem:

For the reviewer's money the essay on Camoens is, not unnaturally, the most interesting section of the book. Whatever critical theory Mr. Bowra may have with respect to the *Lusiads*, his excitement about the poem is catching. And it is right to say that though Camoens has been lucky in his English and American admirers from Fanshawe down, few of them have been more whole-hearted than his latest commentator. The one-eyed old fighter who swam with the manuscript of his epic from the wreck on the windy reefs at the mouth of that "Captain of Waters," the Mekong, somehow takes the fancy. He burned himself into the heart and brain of "his son by election, Sir Richard Burton," who translated his every word. Wordsworth knew what Herman Melville felt. And in our own time the son of an American president carried the *Lusiads* in his duffle-bag on

an African adventure as wild as any of Camoens's own. To discover Camoens is to discover splendor and charm, and for once the reviewer not only knows exactly what he's talking about but is completely right. Dante can do no more than Camoens when the monstrous Adamastor towers up, prophesying woe that makes each particular hair to stand on end. Mr. Bowra is well qualified to tell of the glory of the great poet. And it is refreshing to find an interpreter who writes so understandingly of the splendid madness of patriotism.⁶

Four months later Bacon reviewed Ford's edition of *Os Lusíadas*, published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. "Genius with One Eye" offers unqualified praise for the scholar: "This noble edition of the noble Portuguese epic in the original is the crowning work of one of the greatest of Romance language scholars." He then turns to what he calls Camões's "exotisme":

Strange lands, strange laws, strange customs, the beliefs, the very clothing, of still stranger men fascinate him as such matters attract or interest few of his predecessors. And he paints everything with meticulous exactness—the holy threads on the Brahmin's bosom, the many-colored birds levying tribute on the green nutmegs in the Banda Isles, the Borneo trees dripping camphor, Malacca's market "in the womb of morning," the Zamorin of Calicut chewing his betel, the Malay with his poisoned darts ("well-known to me"), Hindu castes, and a thousand other details of the unfamiliar.

Bacon concludes panegyrically:

The divine energy, the chivalrous nature, the imagination, rampant but always feeding on reality, the wit, the exaltation of mind, and the mighty line will last for ever and explain well enough why Camões has captured so many and such various enthusiasts in the palace corridors of Ferrara, in the forecastles of American frigates, by camp fires in East Africa or Arabia, and under the lamp at Grasmere. To have engaged the fancy of

Tasso and Wordsworth, of Melville and Sir Richard Burton, to have revealed the India, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Golden Chersonese of this world and of the spirit, to have fixed a great language for two great nations, and to be a source of uncontaminated pleasure for whosoever masters their beautiful tongue—what more could poet hope? Nor is there much that shall “outlive this powerful rhyme, the living record of his memory,” who could get the whole Atlantic into the two miraculously intranslatable verses:

Desfez-se a nuvem negra, e c’um sororo.

Bramido muito longe o mar soou.

Homer knew that long sonorous roar of the sea booming under the disintegrating black squall.⁷

Accompanying Bacon’s review was his translation of Book X, stanzas 81, 87-90, of *Os Lusíadas* that he had already used as a Christmas greeting in 1945.⁸ He would make only minor changes in them—punctuation, a word here and there—when these stanzas found their place in Bacon’s translation of the whole.⁹

Two years after reviewing Ford’s edition, Bacon published a sonnet titled “Luis de Camoens” in the *Atlantic Monthly* in November 1948 (182: 98):

You are spice islands. You are the golden bird
That soars until it dies. You are the night
Out of which towers Adamastor’s height,
And whence he spoke the enigmatic word.
You are the mystery beyond Cape Verde.
You are the ships bound on their sunward flight.
You are conceits baroque, quaint, recondite,
That capture the sublime—or the absurd.
You knew the rivers of Babylon where the harp
Was hanged upon the willows, head surf roll
When the typhoon stormed the Cambodian shoal,
And, when the black squalls guttered out and ceased,
Gave us the Epic that retains the sharp
Tang of new oceans and the Gorgeous East.

As he had with the excerpt from *Os Lusíadas* in 1945, Bacon printed this poem privately for use as his Christmas greeting in 1950.¹⁰

Bacon's translation of *Os Lusíadas* has held its own in the more than half-century since its publication. Sticking faithfully to the original's ottava rima and despite the frequent presence of some cherished archaisms—for example, "thou shalt" and "spake," it remains the most readable of modern translations.¹¹ The *Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation* (2000) calls Bacon's work "convincing."

This scholarly work maintains the best of the tradition of Camões translators and even satisfies the demands of rhyme with ease and accomplishment:

But an old man of venerable air,
Who on the seafront stood among the crowd,
Turned his eyes towards us with a steady stare
And thrice his head as one in grief he bowed.¹²

When it was first published Bacon's translation received a number of significant reviews. The most notable of these were "Portuguese Epic in Octaves," by Professor Thomas G. Bergin of Yale University and published in the *Saturday Review of Literature* 33 (Sept. 23, 1950), page 31; "Hymn to Portugal," by the poet-translator Dudley Fitts of Philips Academy (Andover, Massachusetts), which appeared in the *New York Times Book Review* (Dec. 14, 1950), page 9; "A Portuguese Epic," unsigned, in the *London Times Literary Supplement* (Mar. 16, 1951), page 168; untitled, by L. L. Barrett in *Books Abroad*, 25 (Summer 1951), 172; and, untitled, by S. Griswold Morley in the *Hispanic Review*, 19 (Oct. 1951), 368-69.¹³

Morley, who was Antero de Quental's translator in the 1920s, although admitting to favoring Camões' lyrics over his epic, nevertheless sees great merit in Bacon's effort:

Leonard Bacon has gone at his translation of the *Lusiads* with the enthusiasm and gusto which are part of his character. "Five years of monomania," he says, were devoted to this task. This, on the part of the man from whose pen, among living English poets, the ottava rima flows most easily, has resulted, as one would expect, in a fluent and intelligent rendering. There have

been some nine versions before this one, and Bacon's will in all probability be the one that the general reader of the future will use. It is faithful, dignified and retains something of the archaic diction without being out of date.

The Bergin and Fitts reviews are equally favorable, but go on to other matters, notably the historical importance of Portugal and its effect on the literary reputation of *Os Lusíadas*. Fitts writes:

"The *Lusiads*," like the "Aeneid," is first of all a paean of national consciousness, a hymn of patriotism—the right sort of patriotism, as Mr. Bacon points out, and it scarcely becomes any English-speaking person of the present time to disparage it, to sneer at it, because its global pretensions are so out of key with the sadly reduced Portugal of today. England was once like Portugal at its height; and we too may have had our moment. However that may be, it is both esthetically spiritually enthralling to watch here the transformation of Vasco da Gama's great voyage—surely one of the most significant in history—into an apotheosized persona of a nation, to see how the imagination of the poet universalizes human action and makes a lasting myth of it. Heroic literature has not so many instances of this that we can afford to let unfamiliarity of language or of attitude deprive us of Camões.

Not coincidentally, I think, does Fitts take issue with Bergin's position on the importance of Camões' epic as expressed, condescendingly, in Bergin's earlier review of Bacon's translation:

[F]or the epic as for so many things, patriotism, though admirable, is not enough. Indeed, it is a downright drawback unless the country whose merits are praised has "made good" to such an extent as to give its national history a world significance. When Virgil speaks with solemnity of the destiny of the Roman people we listen with respect because the destiny of Rome was in the event a great part of the destiny of Western man. But when Camões describes the Portuguese as a race so

valiant as to terrify even the elements or prophecies that Lisbon
will be another Rome we can only smile tenderly for his
aspirations and regret that the little country couldn't live up to
them.

The unnamed reviewer in the *London Times Literary Supplement* (Mar. 16, 1951), page 168, praised Bacon's work: "Mr. Bacon has achieved a difficult feat; he has made a translation of *The Lusiads* of which the effect is quietly Elizabethan without the uncertain benefit of imposed verbal archaisms in an profusion." In addition, the reviewer quotes with approval from Bacon's introductory essay:

"One of the great and attractive qualities of the poem," he writes, is a sort of pervading sense of newness, which Camões feels himself and induces in others. Dante knew about the Ganges and Chaucer about Cathay . . . But Camões, as has been often said before, was the first highly imaginative European to visit the tropics and the Orient."

To which the reviewer adds:

And so, while Camões exultingly deploys all the mythology of the ancient world, he comes with his immediate and veracious tale of adventure into the world of his sea-faring countrymen. Geographical poetry can seldom had been finer.

Look where the oceans of the Orient lie,

With their infinity of islands sown;

So that the reader of Marlowe and of Milton, and indeed of Camões's unflagging admirer Melville, has one notable reason for coming to the good translation now accessible.

When Bacon died on January 1, 1954, there were notices of his death in some of the larger newspapers and journals. Obituaries appeared in the *New York Times* on January 2 (page 12) and (on the front page) the *Providence Journal*, also on January 2 (pages 1, 3). Later in the year, in the British journal *Atlante*, 2 (No. 3, 1954), page 168, the well-known scholar and Lusophile Harold V. Livermore published his "Memoir" of the American writer.¹⁴ It is reproduced in its entirety:

Although the Portuguese double centenary of 1940 was marked in the United States by the republication of [Sir Richard] Fanshaw's version of the *Lusiads*, an undertaking due to the devotion of Professor J. D. M. Ford, it was not until ten years later that a splendid new verse translation, splendidly produced by the Hispanic Society of America, proved that the grain had fallen on good soil. The translation appeared in time for the Colloquium on Luso-Brazilian studies held at Washington in the fall of 1950, and it was natural that Leonard Bacon should be the lion of the occasion. We had corresponded for some time before we met at a crowded party in the Brazilian Embassy in Washington. Quite suddenly I became conscious that the tall and alert figure on the other side of the room must be Leonard Bacon, and by dint of a similar telepathy he recognised me. We then studiously avoided noticing one another for a quarter of an hour. After that we, or rather I, noticed no one else. His conversation, the expression of an abounding and generous personality, was a joy. A talk in the subterranean bar of a Washington hotel, and an unrehearsed allocution before the applauding members of the Colloquium, a discourse in a restaurant (only slightly interrupted by the irrelevancy of a fashion-parade), his cordial welcome as he stood in the Christmas sunlight on the station, the charming atmosphere of his home, The Acorns, at Peace Dale [Rhode Island], his recollections of Shaw and the other English writers he had known, his plunging into some controversial statement as he stood menacing a glistening duck with poised carving fork, his Christmas-card poems which ranted from Camoens to the sparrows and sassafras of a New England garden—it is hard to think that these cannot happen again.

Born in 1887, Bacon taught English in the University of California for some years before devoting himself to poetry. His original verse won him a Pulitzer prize, fellowship of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and membership of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Long before embarking on the *Lusiads*, he had collaborated with his friend Selden Rose in an able English translation of the *Poema de mio*

Cid. His verse was, like himself, vigorous and fluent, and his opinions on the writing of poetry full of originality and wisdom. He died suddenly on New Year's Day.

To Livermore's tribute can be added as a sort of coda, the last paragraph in the entry on Bacon in *World Authors 1900-1950*.¹⁵

Bacon's interest in European poetry culminated in his last book, a translation of Luis de Camões's [*sic*] *The Lusiads*, published by the Hispanic Society of America in 1950, after what he described as "five years of monomania." Successfully rendering Camões's ottava rima, a form in which Bacon was well practiced through his imitations of Byron, it was welcomed by the comparatists Dudley Fitts and Thomas Bergin, among others, and remains a standard verse translation of Portugal's national epic for English-speaking readers. In 1951 Bacon was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

By 1951 as well Bacon had composed another two sonnets on Camões, the first of which reads:

Have I done with Camoens?—Is he done with me?
 Although, like Fanshawe and the rest, I failed
 To shadow for the splendor that once sailed
 Across the new-discovered "Secret Sea,"
 Yet the game was worth the candle. Liberty
 Lived on the page. And what a flag he nailed
 To the masthead of the Soul! Brave thought, not staled
 By cant, but fit to keep republics free.
 The one-eyed wanderer, whose clear, lovely mind
 Puzzles sophistication, holds the clue
 To labyrinths we all must blunder through,
 Sophisticates or not, and still whets bright
 The honor and the conscience of mankind,
 Against the reign of Chaos and Old Night.¹⁶

He answered his own question when on March 13, 1951, Bacon delivered

the Gayley Memorial Lecture at the University of California in Berkeley. His title was “Camões and the Glory of Portugal.” In 1954—the year of his death—Bacon’s lecture was included in *Five Galeley Lectures, 1947-1954*, published by the University of California Press. For publication he included as pre-texts two sonnets collected under the title “Camões,” the first being the one beginning “Have I done with Camões?” (quoted above) and the second one reading:

How shall we judge Camões?—Judge the Sea,
 Anatomize a forest, count the birds
 In the Fall migration, measure well the words
 That are to analyse a melody,
 Pick and choose elements of artistry,
 Plunge deep with Proteus’ oceanic herds,
 Sail round all Guardafuis and Cape Verdes,
 Adamastor still maintains his mystery.
 But the man is here, as if in talk with you,
 In spite of all conventions of his time,
 Conceit and pun, extravagating rhyme—
 So runs the critic’s dry as dust rehearsal.
 What matter, if Paradisiac powers renew,
 Simple, complex, individual, universal?¹⁷

Before “launching into” his “tremendous theme,” Bacon sounded a personal note:

My hero—and he was all of that—is Luiz Vaz de Camões, “the great poet of a little people,” and because of the Iron Curtain of language perhaps not so widely known in the English-speaking world as he deserves to be for his noble verse and his noble mind. But before launching into what to me is a tremendous theme, I must make two admissions, first, that I am pretty much of a tyro with respect to the magnificent language of Portugal, and, second, that I am in the words of a Portuguese friend, “a co-religionist of the Camonian cult”—a besotted enthusiast, who had his small episode on the Road to Damascus some thirty years ago. It was then that the scales fell from my eyes, as I

wandered idly through a footnote in Fiske's *Discovery of America*, where the fiftieth stanza of the Fifth Book of the *Lusiads* burned as bright as a ruby in a beam of sun. This happens to be a stanza so easy that a little French and less Latin would enable anyone to perceive without difficulty its clear transplendence. And my demon told me there and then that some day, if only because of those eight blazing and sonorous lines, I would translate the Epic, which has, in fact, come to pass.¹⁸

To cap off his talk Bacon then read his poem on Camões that metaphorizes the poet, beginning: "You are spice Islands. You are the golden bird..."¹⁹

Notes

¹ G[erald] M[oser], *Hispania* 34 (Feb. 1971): 101.

² J. D. M. Ford to Leonard Bacon, June 12, 1950, Leonard Bacon Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University. Jeremiah Denis Matthias Ford himself deserves further attention. It can be noted in passing, however, that this long-time teacher of the Romance languages at Harvard University (Smith Professor of French and Spanish Literature, 1907-43) published, besides editions of *Os Lusíadas* and of Sir Richard Fanshawe's translation of Camões' epic (1940), entries on Portuguese literature in the *New International Encyclopedia* (1902) and on Camões and António Ferreira in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1908, 1909), *A Portuguese Grammar* (with E. C. Hills and J. de Siqueira Coutinho (1925, 1944), editions of the *Letters of John III, King of Portugal, 1521-1557* (1931), the *Letters of the Court of John III, King of Portugal* (with L. G. Moffatt) (1933), and *Crónica de Dom João de Castro* (1936). See *Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Jeremiah Denis Matthias Ford* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948) xv-xxxii.

³ *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life: 1500 to the Present* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000) 154.

⁴ *Atlantic Monthly* 193 (Mar. 1954): 44.

⁵ Leonard Bacon to J. D. M. Ford, August 7, 1946, Leonard Bacon Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

⁶ *Saturday Review of Literature* 29 (Feb. 16, 1946): 44.

⁷ Leonard Bacon, "Genius With One Eye," *Saturday Review of Literature* 29 (June 8, 1946): 42-43.

⁸ There is a copy of this broadside in the John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

⁹ "Camões on the Cosmos," *Saturday Review of Literature* 29 (June 8, 1946): 43.

¹⁰ There is a copy of this broadside in the John Hay Library, Brown University.

¹¹ Because Bacon is an American his translation falls outside the geographical limits, if not the linguistic province, for consideration in the studies published in *Camões em Inglaterra*, coordinated by Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa (Lisbon: Ministério da Educação/ Instituto de

Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1992). Even there, however, Bacon figures in passing on pages 14, 46, 73, and 238, n. 65.

¹² M[ike] H[arland], "Camões," in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in Translation*, ed. Peter France (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 440.

¹³ In a review published a decade after the publication of Bacon's translation Américo da Costa Ramalho concludes: "No seu conjunto de apresentação gráfica e conteúdo, esta nova edição em língua inglesa de *Os Lusíadas* honra a Cultura Norte-Americana" (*Estudos Camonianos*, 2nd ed. [Lisbon: Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1980], page 114). The author tells us that this review first appeared in *Humanitas* (Coimbra), XIII-XIV (1960-61). In April 1950 the *Revista de Portugal* informed its readers that "brevemente será divulgada a primeira tradução Americana do imortal Poema, feita pelo Poeta Leonard Bacon, recentemente laureado pelo Prémio Pulitzer" ("Notas Várias," Series A, XV, page 156). In *Ocidente* ("Notas e Comentários," 39 [July-Dec. 1950], page 249) appeared the following unsigned note: "'*Os Lusíadas*' em Inglês—A 'The Hispanic Society of America', de New York, que tem a especialidade das edições impecáveis, organizadas e impressas com a devoção e respeito que se devem a Obras-Primas, acaba de publicar, uma nova edição de '*Os Lusíadas*', sobre tradução em verso de Leonard Bacon, que escreveu também um prefácio, Introdução, notas e posfácio a respeito de Camões e do Poema. Ilustra ainda o volume um nítido mapa das viagens de Camões e de Vasco da Gama, tendo marcados os lugares presumivelmente mais conhecidos pelo Épico.—Com esta nova edição, alguns milhares de Ingleses cultos sentirão melhor as belezas imorredouras do Poema da Raça Lusíada."

¹⁴ Additional notices of Bacon's death appeared in *Newsweek* 43 (Jan. 11, 1954): 53, *Saturday Review of Literature* 37 (Jan. 16, 1954): 10, *Atlantic Monthly* 193 (Mar. 1954): 44; *Wilson Library Bulletin* 28 (Mar. 1954): 522, and *Poetry* 84 (May 1954): 123.

¹⁵ *World Authors 1900-1950*, ed. Martin Seymour-Smith and Andrew C. Kimmens (New York and Dublin: H. W. Wilson, 1996), I, page 192.

¹⁶ Quoted in Leonard Bacon, "Camões and the Glory of Portugal," in *Five Gayley Lectures 1947-1954* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954) 48.

¹⁷ Bacon, "Camões and the Glory," 48.

¹⁸ Bacon, "Camões and the Glory," 49-50. Here, for the record, is John Fiske's note on page 382, volume one, of *The Discovery of America* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1902):

The greatest of Portuguese poets represents the Genius of the Cape as appearing to the storm-tossed mariners in cloud-like shape, like the Jinni that the Fisherman of the Arabian tale released from a casket. He expresses indignation at their audacity in discovering his secret, hitherto hidden from mankind:—

Eu sou aquelle occulto e grande Cabo,
A quem chamais vós outros Tormentorio,
Que nunca á Ptolomeo, Pomponio, Estrabo,
Plinio, e quantos passaram, fui notorio:
Aqui toda a Africana costa acabo
Neste meu nunca vista promontorio,
Que para o polo Antartico se estende,
A quem vossa ousadia tanto offende.
Camoens, *Os Lusíadas*, v. 50.

¹⁹ The Leonard Bacon Collection at the Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, includes autograph and typescript copies of his translation of *Os Lusíadas*, as well as copious notes on Camões and the history of Portugal and correspondence regarding the preparation and publication of the book.

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Comic Readings

João R. Figueiredo

Abstract. The only comic character of *Os Lusíadas*, Fernão Veloso, is the spokesman in two important moments of the poem. I shall argue that there is only a difference in degree between these two episodes (the meeting with the African natives at the bay of St. Helena and the encounter with the nymphs at the Island of Love), since in both cases the task of reading is thematized by Camões.

The episode of Fernão Veloso that immediately precedes the momentous encounter of the Portuguese fleet with the giant Adamastor is traditionally seen as the only moment of comic relief in *Os Lusíadas*. Let me briefly recall it. When narrating to the King of Malindi the events of his voyage along the African coast, Vasco da Gama tells of the encounter the sailors had in the bay of St. Helena with a local tribe. This was their first contact with the African shore since leaving Lisbon. Vasco and his men are measuring the skies to determine their geographical position when a native is brought in by a group of sailors that had taken him by force as he was quietly collecting honey on the hill nearby. The two most striking features of this poor prisoner are the terror on his face and his total inability both to understand what is told to him and to make himself understood. This inability comes, according to Vasco, from his being “Selvagem mais que o bruto Polifemo” (V.28).¹ To the captain’s great amazement, the native prefers to accept transparent beads and a red cap instead of gold and silver. Once set free, he runs back to the village. The following day the native comes back to the beach with his companions

in search of more gifts. Vasco thus assumes that they are tame and friendly. This is why Fernão Veloso dares to follow them into the bush, though he soon returns more swiftly than he had gone, as the natives chase him. A fight follows, Vasco is wounded by an arrow, and revengeful bloodshed takes place. In a comic register, the epilogue shows Veloso, teased in mocking conversation by one of his companions, explaining his haste in returning to the beach by his fear that his fellows would have to face the enemy without him:

Disse então a Veloso um companheiro
 (Começando-se todos a sorrir):
 “Oula, Veloso amigo, aquele outeiro
 É melhor de decer que de subir.”
 “Si, é (responde o ousado aventureiro);
 Mas, quando eu pera cá vi tantos vir
 Daqueles Cães, depressa um pouco vim,
 Por me lembrar que estáveis cá sem mim.”
 (V.35)²

Then, in reported speech, in a sort of second, now strictly narrative, aftermath, Vasco tells how Veloso was threatened by the natives as soon as he disappeared beyond the hill. Of course, Veloso's comic re-description of his failure as both an explorer and soldier makes us read the expression “ousado aventureiro” (“th’*Advent’rer* bold”) ironically, as a mock-epitheton. Also, we are led to revise our first assumptions—as the sailors are led to revise theirs—about the natives’ tameness and friendliness. In the end, they are “gente bestial, bruta e malvada.” The whole episode is a series of mutual incomprehension and misunderstandings. Even the teasing anecdote of the other sailor and Veloso's reply, in their ironical indirection, seem to be a fit closing for the episode, as the brief dialogue is meant to be equivocal and ambiguous. The consequence of misunderstanding is the actual telling of jokes, misunderstanding being a joke itself, in this case. In the end, the attempt to extract from the natives any information on how to reach India failed. As in the beginning of the episode, Vasco and Veloso could still say “Nem ele entende a nós nem nós a ele” (“*Hee* understood not *Us*, neither *Him Wee*”). Trade and communication failed altogether. Only bloodshed was memorable. Something interesting enough to deserve attention is the fact that the vindication of Vasco's military pride and wounded leg is construed by Camões as

a “re[s]posta tão tecida” (so woven an answer), that is, it is presented to the reader under the description of a text:

Mas nós, como pessoas magoadas,
 A reposta lhe demos tão tecida,
 Que em mais que nos barretes se suspeita
 Que a cor vermelha levam desta feita.
 (V.33)³

The “resposta tão tecida” (“so woven an answer”) is translated by Fanshawe as “a ready answeare, so in print,” which evinces the configuration of the reply as a verbal one.⁴ But the Portuguese word “tecida” (“woven”) and the reference to the color of the answer that would tinge the natives’ bodies as to resemble the redness of the cap, necessarily reminds us of the fabric of the cap offered to the prisoner as a pledge of amiable intention. The idea that one has to capture another person to declare one’s friendship for him is a very intriguing one. But what is mainly at stake here is that the retrospective reference to the red fabric ironically stresses the verbal character that was wanting in this stillborn dialogue. In consequence, we have a group of persons answering again and again questions that they were not asked, and another group of persons who began collecting honey in the woods and ended up washed in blood. Questions and answers do not match at all in this awkward encounter and even the disproportion in military resources stands as an instance of this. The result is that the Portuguese in the end can do nothing but tell jokes about themselves to each other. That is the only dialogue possible. Issues of cultural relativism could well come out of the fact that the first African encounter in Vasco’s voyage was doomed to fail. But my main concern is to investigate how this succession of failures impinges upon the reader’s mind, taking into consideration that both in the beginning and in the end Camões presents such misencounters as acts of misreading.

In fact, Fernão Veloso will be the spokesman in the final case of hermeneutic disaster. The intricacies are far more complex this time. When the fleet lays anchor at the island of Venus, in Canto IX, it does not take too long for the sailors to notice the voluptuous nymphs running wildly (or so they think) among the trees. Veloso signals the discovery to his mates with an exclamation:

Dá Veloso, espantado, um grande grito:
 “Senhores, caça estranha (disse) é esta!
 Se inda dura o Gentio antigo rito,
 A Deusas é sagrada esta floresta.
 Mais descobrimos do que humano esprito
 Desejou nunca, e bem se manifesta
 Que são grandes as cousas e excelentes
 Que o mundo encobre aos homens imprudentes.

Sigamos estas Deusas, e vejamos
 Se fantásticas são, se verdadeiras.”
 (IX.69-70)⁵

Veloso is thus assigned another exploratory role in *Os Lusíadas*. As in the stop at St. Helena bay before the turning of the Cape, he is the one Camões picks to undertake the exploration. Here, it is up to him to announce the cognitive project that is about to take place. After the mishap with the African natives, Veloso seems to proceed now as though he were a true, competent anthropologist. He firstly states his amazement at the presence of such a “strange game” in the forests of the island and draws a historical-theological conclusion about the presence of naked women running amid the bushes: that the island is consecrated to some kind of pagan female divinities. Then, Veloso engages in a self-conscious meditation about the nature and variety of things in the world still awaiting discovery, and about how fortunate he and his fellow sea-travelers are for taking part in such a process. Lastly, and herein lies the cognitive project itself, Veloso exhorts the sailors to pursue the Goddesses so as to discover whether they are real or fantastical. In the course of these remarks, Veloso dares implicitly to suggest the superiority of those who make such discoveries when he claims that all these superior and excellent things are hidden away from imprudent men. The initial couplet of the following stanza (“Sigamos estas Deusas e vejamos / Se fantásticas são, se verdadeiras”) thus appears as the natural next step in the inquiry. The disposition to investigate the nature of the Goddesses would show that Veloso and his fellows are, in turn, prudent men. One editor of *Os Lusíadas*, commenting on the episode of Canto V, remarks that a more serious endeavor is reserved for Veloso in Canto IX.⁶ For Faria e Sousa, the most influential commentator Camões has ever had, there is no doubt about this, for he reads the passage as a plea against all the ignorant people who are incapable of reading

beyond the letter of the poem and thus capturing the hidden meaning of the text. He is, of course, thinking of the “wonders... and great blessings.../ the world and Nature hide from vulgar men.” I quote him:

I finalmente llama ignorantes a los que leyendo este canto piensan, que estas Ninfas son materiales, i no divinas, supuestas a celebrar gloriosamente esta accion. I descifrada toda esta Poesia, todo es grande, todo excelente, i todo divino: i esto es lo que se encubre aqui a los imprudentes, ignorantes que no la saben descifrar.⁷

Briefly, Faria ends up by saying that Veloso’s words are an apology for the need to read Camões, and in particular the episode of the island of Love, allegorically. According to him, the lines “Que são grandes as cousas e excelentes / que o mundo encobre aos homens imprudentes” refer to the poem itself and an exegesis of them would of necessity bear an effect on the rest of the episode. But how can Faria e Sousa or anyone else take Veloso’s endeavor that seriously? If we read carefully the stanza that precedes Veloso’s outburst at the sight of the naked women, we have no difficulty at all in figuring out what Camões meant by “coisas grandes e excelentes” (“big and excellent things”) that are hidden from imprudent men:

Começam de enxergar subitamente,
 Por entre verdes ramos, várias cores,
 Cores de quem a vista julga e sente
 Que não eram das rosas ou das flores,
 Mas da lã fina e seda diferente,
 Que mais incita a força dos amores,
 De que se vestem as humanas rosas,
 Fazendo-se por arte mais fermosas.
 (IX.68)⁸

The ontological concern shown by Veloso is just a way of saying that he wants to know whether the nymphs (or whatever they are) could satisfy him sexually. It is their bodies that are hidden from sight by the fine wool and silk garments they wear with the deliberate purpose of enticing sexual desire. These are the “wonders and great blessings” imprudent men cannot devise.

Prudentia, we know, is the Latin equivalent of *phronesis*, the virtue that Aristotle defined as being a kind of practical wisdom, an ability to know what

is good or bad for oneself in cases when deliberation is necessary, since there is no general knowledge available.⁹ In Faria's serious interpretation of Veloso's sayings, lack of prudence is the equivalent of ignorance, which has hermeneutic consequences. A bad interpreter, according to this view, would be one who was unable to decide when to read allegorically and when to read literally. But maybe there is no need for such a virtue as construed by Faria e Sousa. Much as when they stopped at the South African bay, the Portuguese, once more, do not have a clue as to what is happening to them. The African natives were not as friendly as Vasco and Veloso thought. And now the nymphs prove themselves to be not that wild or indeed chaseable in any sport-like way, either. In fact, it is the nymphs who are in control of the situation, though the sailors may think otherwise. Here, the men behave exactly as the women want them to, and it would be tiresome to catalogue further instances of what I am saying. Veloso's ignorance, however, needs to be qualified. In fact, he takes for true and real what is merely fictive. Camões does not spare any efforts to make us understand that the island is the supreme fiction of an accomplished maker, Venus herself. References to the act of painting are legion and culminate in stanza 60, where the whole landscape is described in terms of an exquisite tapestry:

Pois a tapeçaria bela e fina
 Com que se cobre o rústico terreno,
 Faz ser a de Aqueménia menos dina,
 Mas o sombrio vale mais ameno.¹⁰

And in stanza 61, where Zephyrus and Flora come to the help of the goddess of Love:

Pintando estava ali Zéfiro e Flora
 As violas da cor dos amadores,
 O lírio roxo, a fresca rosa bela,
 Qual reluze nas faces da donzela.¹¹

Everything is artificial on the Island of Love. The sailors gape at the tapestry as though it were not art but nature itself. Against Faria e Sousa, we could argue that to lift the tapestry in order to uncover the hidden meaning beneath the fiction would lead to nothing, as nothing it is that lies beneath the tapes-

try. Or, to be more precise, only fiction lies beneath fiction, since we may infer that the art that covers the valley and makes it pleasant is exactly the same that covers the nymphs' bodies. Are not the wool and silk of their garments the materials *par excellence* of the very rugs that surpass in quality those from Persia? Beneath the text there is more text, as behind the fabric there is more fabric. This brings us back to the episode in Canto V, where the cap was a pretext for Camões to talk about texts, since he played upon the etymological root of "text" so as to make of the red cap a kind of text upon which two kinds of readers were not in agreement. Actually, the red cap was a sort of text the Portuguese flaunted to lure the natives into trading and to give information on how to reach India—but in the end found no fit interpreter. Having the same bold adventurer as the main character and spokesman, the Island of Love must be seen as a development of the red cap episode.

What are we to make then of Fernão Veloso's attitude in Canto IX and his cognitive project? We know his project is both a joke—for he really does not care about ontology or anthropology—and a proof of ignorance—for he does not have the faintest idea that he is being outmaneuvered by the nymphs in a fictional world. But the question of prudence in a hermeneutic sense does not make sense here, contrary to what Faria e Sousa claimed. For then Faria would have to know already that the poem was meant to be read allegorically so that he could declare that the real allegorical meaning of Veloso's lines is that the poem is to be read allegorically. Prior to the reading of Canto IX, there had to be a general description of allegory that allowed the interpreter to recognize an allegorical textual indication to read the poem allegorically at that time. This is hardly to be prudent in a technical way—the way in which Faria e Sousa thinks he is using the term—for any particular choice that might exist is overruled by the general law being instantiated. There is no place for deliberation here. The same prudence Faria praises in Veloso's moral conduct should warn us against the excessive need to call on philosophy, theology or history to help us in the reading of Canto IX, not to say the entire poem. For what Faria argues is that prudence, in the reading of *Os Lusíadas*, should be the ability to recognize and appeal to a general law, the law of allegory, and not the power to solve particular problems locally. We could say, after all, that Faria e Sousa reads "prudence" with a capital *P*—the allegory of a virtue that decides things for us and spares us the predicaments of decision-making. Perhaps instead of accusing of ignorance all of those who read the poem literally because they read Veloso's meditation on the secrets of the uni-

verse literally, we should rather focus on the idea that ignorance of what lies behind the woods or beneath the carpet is in fact a sort of precondition for wisdom, as it propels knowledge, which is unpredictable and not subject to a pre-existing plan. I do not say this in the sense that because we know nothing we are bound to learn something. I am arguing rather that error is a necessary condition for the reading to go on. And we like to think we would rather learn from the errors of others, not from our own. When he faces Veloso making his way into the woods, declaring himself prudent when in reality he is not, the reader is compelled to regard himself as a kind of Veloso adventuring into the exegesis of *Os Lusíadas*. Like the picaresque sailor, the interpreter “de arrogante, crê que vai seguro” (in Fanshawe’s translation, he “walks secure in his own Arrogance”), always risking being seen as a joke and subject both to failure and to glory, which generally happens in spite of himself. He could not do otherwise. In this sense, Camões is not nice to his readers, as he ostentatiously tells them they have to be deluded and miss out on the comprehension of the poem if they want to go on with the reading of it. On the other hand, they are offered the consolation of knowing they are not alone in making mistakes.

Perhaps the biggest consolation of all is to let the reader realize the poem is just a colorful woven fabric. I have already spoken of learning from other people’s mistakes. These two topics are interwoven, in their turn, in the case of a docile straw man who makes both sixteenth-century and present day, in any case actual, readers feel superior and successful. I am referring to the reader *par excellence* of *Os Lusíadas* and in *Os Lusíadas*: the boy King Sebastian himself. In the first stanza of the unusually long dedication to the King (thirteen *stanze* in all), Camões addresses D. Sebastião as “Maravilha fatal da nossa idade”—“The foretold *Wonder* of our *Centurie*,” in Fanshawe’s translation, which is in itself rather telling, since it dispels the ambiguity contained in the adjective “fatal.” In fact, we could interpret “fatal” as meaning either “decreed or prophesized by fate” or, on the other hand, “disastrous, destructive, ruinous, deadly.” Allegedly, History teaches us great lessons, including how to interpret literature. In this case, it is common practice to choose the first alternative, and read the adjective as a positive qualification of the wonder. King Sebastian indeed came to the world on account of divine providence since, historians tell us, an heir to the throne was dramatically wanting and a new surge in the war against the infidel was highly expected. But the truth is not exactly like this. The expression “maravilha fatal” was

actually picked up by Camões from an ode by Horace, Ode xxxvii from Book I, the ode that celebrates the death of Cleopatra. In this poem, Horace says it is time to drink and hit the floor with a free foot, for Cleopatra is dead. There are more reasons to celebrate her end, as the queen was preparing the ruin of the Roman Empire. Camões's "maravilha fatal" is the direct translation of "fatale monstrum," as applied to Cleopatra, the deadly monster Caesar wanted to put in jail.

What is most interesting is that in his Latin translation of parts of *Os Lusíadas*, entitled *Specimen Rerum a Lusitanis*, Fanshawe translated the line "Maravilha fatal da nossa idade" as "Monstrum Virtutis, praesentis Gloria saeculi."¹² The Camoensian "maravilha" is returned to its Horatian origin, "monstrum," here taken etymologically as meaning a display, a show. For better or worse, the adjective "fatal" is replaced by "Virtutis," probably because Fanshawe wanted to avoid the ambiguity inherent to "fatale," the whole expression resembling the common "mirror of virtues." We may wonder whether prudence was among the virtues the king might have possessed. The truth is that the boy king thus made into an inept reader at the outset of the poem, in such an eventful moment as the dedication and *captatio benevolentiae*, makes the reader of *Os Lusíadas* feel superior to the very dedicatee of the poem, the powerful King of Portugal. On this specific occasion, there is no place for historical, let alone allegorical, explanations. The poem, the fiction or the tapestry, as you wish to call it, is totally self-contained.

Notes

¹"More savage than the brutish POLYPHEME." All quotations from *Os Lusíadas* are from the edition of Emanuel Paulo Ramos. Translation is by Sir Richard Fanshawe, *The Lusiad, or, Portugals Historicall Poem* [1655].

²Then to VELOSO said a Jybing lad
(The rest all laughing in their sleeves) "Ho! Frend
"VELOSO: the Hill (it seems) was not so bad
"And hard to be come down, as 'twas t'ascend.
"True (quoth th' *Advent'rer* bold) Howe're, I had
"Not made such haste, but that the DOGGS did bend
"Against the *Fleet*: And I began to doubt me
"It might go ill, that you were here without me.

³But *wee* (as prickt with *smart*, and with dysdaine)
Made them a ready answere, so in print,
That (I believe in earnest) with our Rapps
Wee made their *Heads* as *crimson* as their *capps*.

⁴In his commentaries to the poem, António José Saraiva reads the adjective “tecida” as a visual metaphor: “As balas disparadas contra os negros eram tantas que juntas formavam um tecido. Com esta palavra inicia-se um jogo de palavras: os barretes dados pelos portugueses aos negros eram de *tecido* vermelho, mas estes levaram também o vermelho do sangue resultante do *tecido* das balas.” (“The bullets fired against the natives were so many that together they formed a fabric. With this word, a pun is set to work: the caps offered by the Portuguese to the natives were made of red *fabric*, but in the end the natives also bore the red blood resulting from the *fabric* of the bullets.”) *Os Lusíadas*, ed. António José Saraiva, 236. If I agree with the last part of Saraiva’s statement, where the pun is made explicit, the visual metaphor, on the other hand, seems far-fetched. In my opinion, the adjective “tecida” is above all a metonymic development of “resposta” and offers coherence and sturdiness to the answer, thus literalized and conceived as a rhetorical, textual one.

⁵Amaz’d VELOSO with a lowd voice cry’d;
 “Strange *Game* (my masters) in this *Forest* rise:
 “The ancient *Poets Tales* are verif’y’d,
 “And this *Isle’s* sacred to the DEITIES.
 “Nay, what to *humane-fancy* is deni’d
 “To hope, or comprehend, see with your *Eyes*!
 “And see, what *wonders*, what great *blessings* then,
 “The *world* and *Nature* hide from *vulgar* men!
 “Chase we these *Goddesses*; it shall be seen
 “If they be *Real* or *Fantastical*.

⁶*Os Lusíadas*. Ed. Frank Pierce: “This sailor is later involved in rather more solemn episodes” (116).

⁷Sousa, t. 4, p. 201: “And finally calls ignorant those who read this canto and believe these Nymphs to be material, not divine and able gloriously to commemorate the action. And once deciphered all this Poetry, everything is great, everything excellent, and everything divine; and this is what is here hidden from ignorant, imprudent men, incapable of deciphering it.”

⁸When suddainly, thorow the Green-wood leaves,
 Variety of *Colours* they descry;
Colours, which soon the judging eye perceives
 Are not of *Roses*, or fresh *Flow’rs* the *dye*:
 But, of fine *wool*; or *That*, the rich *worm* weaves:
 Of which LOVE makes his *Lure*, and *Sauces* high;
 Of which their Garments *Humane Roses* make,
 To make the *Bird* sell for the *Feathers* sake.

⁹See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, especially book VI, chapters v-xiii.

¹⁰The fine and noble *Carpets* then (which *there*
 Lye to be trod on by the meanest Plant)
 Make those of PERSIA, *course*; and *pleasanter*
These of the gloomy Valley *All* will grant.]

¹¹*There*, ZEPHYRUS and FLORA painting stood
 The *Vilet*, with the *Pale* of *Paramours*;
 The *Flow’r-de-lis*, with *blew*; the lovely *Rose*,
 Just *such*, as in a *Virgin’s cheek* it blows.

¹²Fanshawe, *Specimen Rerum a Lusitanis*, in *The Poems and Translations of Sir Richard* 338.

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The View from Almada Hill: Myths of Nationhood in Camões and William Julius Mickle

Lawrence Lipking

Abstract. Myths of nationhood sustain both *Os Lusíadas* and W. J. Mickle's very popular and influential version of it, *The Lusiad* (1776). But what Camões transmitted to Mickle was not only a sense of the destiny of his nation but also its deep-seated contradictions. Just as 16th-century Portugal peculiarly combined feudal and mercantile values, so did 18th-century Scotland, and in converting an epic of humanism into an epic of commerce, liberty, and civilization, Mickle expressed the tensions of an enlightened age. "Almada Hill" (1781) superimposes a vision of modern Britain on the Portuguese past and present.

"It is a sound rule of thumb in propaganda," according to R. P. Blackmur, "that no country tends to believe any lies other than its own."¹ Blackmur was mocking the self-serving cold-war fantasies of the United States and the Soviet Union. But lies can be flexible. In the form of myths they pass from country to country and sometimes, through fabulous transmigrations of spirit, become the heart and soul of a new nation. Thus Roman gods found another home, in *Os Lusíadas*, by taking an interest in Portugal; and Venus herself heard Portuguese as Latin, with a slight change of accent (1:33, 7-8). One great empire certifies another. Perhaps this is propaganda. Yet imagined communities depend on the stories and legends that hold them together. Such stories *are* the nation, as many theorists now say and poets have always said. And often the way that a poet reads the old myths that are most important to him throws light on the beliefs, if not the lies, by which he and his

nation live. Translated properly, by Camões, the *Aeneid* foreshadows a possible future, now seen to have been realized as Portugal. Translated in turn, *Os Lusíadas* prefigures the future nations of Europe—not least in their contradictions. Hence myths look forward as well as backward. Classical gods turn into Christian allegories, and chivalric crusades turn into market research.

When William Julius Mickle published his very popular and influential version of *The Lusiad* in 1776, he converted “the epic of Humanism”² into the Epic of Commerce. Mickle has not been a favorite of modern scholars. He makes his designs on the poem all too clear, not only with hundreds of pages of historical and critical commentary but with 300 added lines of “enlargements and interpolations.” Even the texture of the verse is adulterated. Camões’s long-breathed ottava rimas dissolve into pointed heroic couplets, so that a minor climax tends to arrive every few lines, while the absence of stanzas compacts each canto into an interminable, undifferentiated mass (and incidentally keeps the reader from quickly finding a place or passage). The source of this prosody is clearly Pope’s translations of Homer, which had been a runaway commercial success, and Mickle’s Epic of Commerce follows Pope, at a considerable distance, in harmonizing a stormy and often savage text with gentler, enlightened tastes. Camões describes a battle massacre “with deaths, shrieks, blood and sword-thrusts; so many people perished that the very flowers changed color” (4:42, 2-4); Mickle omits the stabbings and bloody flowers, and in support provides a footnote in which Pope similarly tames Homer.³ Only the shrieks are translated: “groans and yellings of despair / With horrid uproar rend the trembling air,” and the pain of slashed bodies is displaced to the sky. The great classicist Richard Bentley supposedly remarked that “it is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer.”⁴ Mickle’s pretty poem is not Camões.

Nor is an Epic of Humanism an Epic of Commerce. The main difference between the two seems less a matter of poetry than of ideology. “How,” Richard Helgerson wonders, “could any reader of Camões, much less a translator, so miss the point?”⁵ *Os Lusíadas* managed imperiously to suppress the base commercial motives or lust for profit that fueled da Gama’s voyage, yet Mickle blithely insists on putting them back. “To Camões, an ‘epic of commerce’ would have seemed a ridiculous paradox,” in Helgerson’s view, since the ancient genre served precisely to legitimate a feudal ethos opposed to commerce (190). The conquering Portuguese heroes, noble in soul, make their own epic of fame and glory; they will sacrifice any mean self-interest,

even life itself, for grand illusions, for king and country and God. Hence Mickle's commercial interpretations could not be more wrong.⁶ Yet at the same time his misreading is "wonderfully apt." For Helgerson agrees with Mickle that trade *was* the point of the Portuguese empire, no matter how hard Camões and his readers and patrons might try to cover it up. From this perspective a bourgeois, mercantile version of early voyages to the East seems "so massively overdetermined" that it assumes "an air of inevitability" (189). In 1776, the year of *The Wealth of Nations* as well as Mickle's *Lusiad*, Adam Smith trumps the *Aeneid*.

Such post-imperial readings of Mickle as well as of Camões are also overdetermined. To any Marxist, "the class-contradictions of poor Camões," condemned to veil a bourgeois epic in aristocratic, feudal frills, will look quite transparent.⁷ Yet the implied superiority to "poor Camões," reduced from the noble, tragic artist he thought himself to a self-deceived lackey, carries its own smug ideological bias. If the Portuguese were deluded about their own motives, they certainly had the courage of their delusions. The last words of *Os Lusíadas* implore King Sebastião to cast off the taint of greed and riches and lead a fresh crusade against the Moors. Notoriously, the king accepted this charge and six years later sacrificed himself and his nation in the disastrous "Battle of the Three Kings" at Alcácer-Quibir. This was very bad for trade. By the time that the poet died in 1580, Portugal had already been absorbed by Spain, and sixty years would pass before it regained its independence, while the Dutch took over much of its colonial empire. Obviously the obsession with fame and glory, and with subduing the world to the faith, had devastated the national interest by any objective economic standard. But would there have been a Portugal without that obsession? The poet and king both shared an ideal that might seem mad to a rational unbeliever. But Portugal had won its empire through irrational daring, just as its soldiers were famous for charging ahead in battle, impetuously and irregularly, sometimes to win against great odds and sometimes to retreat just as fast. Self-interest alone would hardly have spurred da Gama and his men; fewer than 1/3 of those who set out returned, and they did not come back rich. Only a myth sustained them—no Island of Love but a small proud country destined to slay giants. For those who gave their lives to the nation, trade was *not* the point.

Nor was trade the whole point for Mickle. He too derives inspiration from a set of national ideals—or myths or lies—which however complex and contradictory evoke an impassioned historical vision. And his nation too was

contested, because it was not exactly England, or Scotland, or even Great Britain, but somehow all three. Just as the emergence of Portugal as an imagined community, a nation and empire, against the background of Iberia and Castile provides a test case of early modern conceptions of the nation-state, so 18th-century Scotland tests the origins of nationalism. In recent years few scholarly debates have been waged so fiercely.⁸ Moreover, the issues engage literary historians as well as political theorists, because the subject of debate is essentially *mythopoeic*—a matter of the creation of consciousness, of poems and novels and legends, far more than of jurisdictions and laws. In the mid 18th century, when Scotland reinvented itself after Culloden, it needed an epic, and found one in the poems of Ossian, a 3rd-century bard. Were they authentic? The bitter controversy that soon broke out has never completely subsided, and probably never will, so long as Scots argue questions of nationhood with others and themselves.⁹ But the 18th-century quarrels were especially deep because they reflected internal divisions, not only between the Highlands and Lowlands but between rival versions of patriotic pride. On one side, “bardic nationalism” could celebrate the romantic, barbaric integrity of unspoiled Highlanders.

Their language is pure and original, and their manners are those of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conscious of their own antiquity, they long despised others, as a new and mixed people. As they lived in a country only fit for pasture, they were free of that toil and business, which engross the attention of a commercial people.¹⁰

On the other side, many Scots congratulated themselves on their superior enlightenment. Far more than the English, they were open to new ideas and international commerce; Adam Smith was not an aberration in his country. Yet the two sorts of pride often coexisted in Scottish minds.¹¹ If Portuguese identity, in the time of Camões, peculiarly combined feudal and mercantile values, an extreme insularity and an extravagant expansionism, so did Scottish identity in Mickle’s time. Ossian was interleaved with *The Wealth of Nations*.¹²

Mickle himself was surely a son of the Lowlands.¹³ Born in 1735, one year before James Macpherson, the Highlander who was to edit or ventriloquize Ossian, he regarded the final defeat of the Stuarts in the ‘45 with relief, not sorrow; later he would date the rise of British power from the fall of James II and lionize William and Mary. He was educated in Edinburgh but failed in the family business (a brewery) and in his late twenties, bankrupt, went to England,

where he would settle for the rest of his life. While employed as corrector at the Clarendon Press in Oxford he began to translate *The Lusiad*, and raised a subscription that allowed him to quit his job and finish the work, which sold quite well. But his major financial success resulted from an appointment as secretary to his cousin Commodore George Johnstone, whose squadron took prizes from the French and Dutch during the war of 1776-83. A share of this booty made Mickle's fortune. In 1779-80 he also visited Portugal, where he spent eight happy months and, as the celebrated translator of Camões, was well received by noblemen and literati. He died, a wealthy man, in Oxfordshire in 1788. England had been good to him; nor did his commercial and literary achievements seem to owe much to the country where he had been born.

Yet the embrace of imperial English values and interests itself marked a certain type of 18th-century Scot.¹⁴ The English themselves were more conflicted about the costs of empire. The introduction to Mickle's *Lusiad* consists of a long rebuttal of Samuel Johnson, who had told him that "It had been happy for the world, Sir, if your hero Gama, Prince Henry of Portugal, and Columbus, had never been born, or that their schemes had never gone farther than their own imaginations."¹⁵ Though Johnson had once intended to translate *Os Lusíadas*, he had always distrusted Portuguese colonialism. His first publication, a free version of Father Jerónimo Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia* (1735), takes a jaundiced view of the motives of Jesuit missionaries and Portuguese traders.¹⁶ Later, introducing a book about the Spanish and Portuguese discoveries, he concluded that "The *Europeans* have scarcely visited any coast, but to gratify avarice, and extend corruption; to arrogate dominion without right, and practise cruelty without incentive."¹⁷ Greed and hypocrisy always follow the flag of conquest, for Johnson and other "unenlightened" Englishmen. But Scotsmen tended to view the world of commerce through rose-colored, Whiggish glasses, which cast on trade an aura of light and progress. Thus Mickle replies to Johnson by celebrating the mutual rise of learning and commerce after "the dark monkish ages": "While this thick cloud of mental darkness overspread the Western World, was Don Henry prince of Portugal born, born to set mankind free from the feudal system, and to give to the whole world every advantage, every light that may possibly be diffused by the intercourse of unlimited commerce" (1:xxvi). And to clinch the point he calls on the greatest modern Scottish poet, James Thomson, the prophet of *Liberty*.

—For then from ancient gloom emerg'd
 The rising world of Trade, the Genius, then,
 Of Navigation, that in hopeless sloth
 Had slumber'd on the vast Atlantic deep
 For idle ages, starting, heard at last
 The Lusitanian Prince, who, heaven-inspir'd
 To love of useful glory rous'd mankind,
 And in unbounded Commerce mixt the world.¹⁸

However inaccurate in regard to the historical Infante Dom Henrique, these sentiments express the ideal of many Scotsmen after the Act of Union (1707). History had a goal, as Thomson wrote in *Liberty* (1735-6), his long poetical vision; it was finally reaching that goal in the trade and freedom of Britain. The new dispensation would naturally include "the lofty Scot, / To hardship tamed, active in arts and arms, / Fired with a restless, an impatient flame, / That leads him raptured where ambition calls."¹⁹ Indeed, such ambition would transform the Scot from colonized subject to colonizing master, restlessly crossing the ocean to subjugate and liberate raw territories. "Rule, Britannia!", the anthem of conquest, was written by Thomson. A few years later another Scot, David Hume, added a notorious footnote to his essay "Of National Characters": "I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences."²⁰ "Civilized" is a crucial word here. When Johnson defined "civilize" in his *Dictionary* (1755), "To reclaim from savageness and brutality; to instruct in the arts of regular life," he illustrated it with a quotation from Waller: "We send the graces and the muses forth, / To *civilize* and to instruct the North"—a good lesson for Scotland.²¹ But Scots like Hume, Mickle, and their friend James Boswell adopted the word. Mickle and Boswell were especially fond of "civilization." Johnson omitted that word from the *Dictionary*, and rejected Boswell's suggestion to add it to a later edition.²² The anti-imperialistic Englishman preferred "civility," a word that opposed barbarity not with violent conquests but with "Rule of decency; practice of politeness." Nor did Johnson accept the claim that conquistadors and colonists bore the gift of freedom to less enlightened peoples. In a famous retort to the revolu-

tionary American congress, he posed a devastating question: "how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?"²³

Yet liberty, or the myth of liberty, was idolized by Mickle. Encouraged by Boswell, he worked for years on a long "progress poem," "Prospects of Liberty and of Slavery"; and though he never finished it, a shorter poem called "Liberty" was published in his *Poetical Works* (1806).²⁴ Moreover, he drew on the theme repeatedly in *The Lusiad*; "the spirit of liberty breathes through the introduction," according to one reviewer. The history of Portugal, in Mickle's mind, confirms the irresistible progress of civilization. "The founders of the Portuguese monarchy transmitted to their heirs those generous principles of liberty which compleat and adorn the martial character" (1:xlili). Like Highlanders, the Lusitanians defy any effort to impose a foreign culture on their clans; like Britons, they rule the waves and never will be slaves. How then did their empire sink into decay? Mickle largely endorses Camões's diagnosis: luxury, greed, and servility corrupted the nation until its people became slaves first in spirit and then in fact. Indeed, the nation's treatment of its great poet reflects its undoing. "To the eye of a careful observer, the fate of Camoëns throws great light on that of his country, and will appear strictly connected with it. The same ignorance, the same degenerated spirit, which suffered Camoëns to depend on his share of the alms begged in the streets by his old hoary servant, the same spirit which caused this, sunk the kingdom of Portugal into the most abject vassalage ever experienced by a conquered nation" (1:cclxx). To poets who sang of liberty, it was an article of faith that arts would always prosper under freedom, as in "Rule, Britannia!": "The Muses, still with freedom found, / Shall to thy happy coast repair: / Blest isle!" Hence neglect of the arts could signify only an internal, rotting enslavement.

Mickle's belief in the alliance of commerce, civilization, and liberty, all once embodied by Portugal and now by Britain, often results in obvious tensions. If Britons never will be slaves, they have certainly profited from slavery; and Mickle's long account of the Portuguese empire gingerly steers around its best cash crop, the slave trade (had there been a real Island of Love, submissive native girls would have stocked it).²⁵ Nor does the Epic of Commerce seem quite comfortable with the brute force that Portugal had used to establish and maintain its dominance in the East, where money was made from extortion as well as trade. In India "mere adventurers" had driven out "honest merchants." A lengthy comparison of Portugal's Indian trade with Britain's reveals Mickle's deep unease. The second edition of *The Lusiad*

(1778) adds a scornful repudiation of Adam Smith, whose *Wealth of Nations* had argued strongly against monopolies and especially against efforts to suppress free trade. In the long run, Smith suggests, the Portuguese attempt to exclude all other nations from the East Indies had cost more than it gained, and the current monopoly of the East India Company will lead to high prices in England and bad management abroad.²⁶ Mickle is outraged. The East India Company "forms a principal wheel," he insists, in the grand machine of British commerce, and it alone can secure "the essential balance of trade" that private adventurers and government officials would upset (1:ccxliii-iv).²⁷ Moreover, Smith has missed the main point. "All the stupendous fabrics of Portuguese colonization were only founded on the sands, on the quick-sands of human caprice and arbitrary power. They governed by no certain system of laws." But the British empire has enabled merchants to be confident of justice. "On the firm basis of her laws, the colonies of Great Britain have wonderfully prospered, for she gave them an image of her own constitution" (2:cclvii). Thus Mickle's own nation fulfills the promise of commerce, civilization, and liberty that the rise and fall of the Portuguese empire had tragically failed.²⁸

Nevertheless, he needed more reassurance; and curiously he went to Portugal to find it. Mickle's arrival in Lisbon in 1779 was both a sentimental journey, in homage to Camões, and a business venture, since Portuguese neutrality in the American wars provided a safe haven for British marauders. But he also composed a poem there, "in some degree ... a supplement to the *Lusiad*." *Almada Hill: An Epistle from Lisbon* (1781) superimposes thoughts of Britain on a prospect of Portugal's history and landscape. The two nations are intertwined in that scene, the poet explains, because in 1147 a company of English crusaders en route to the Holy Land had helped Afonso Henriques (Alfonso I) to besiege the Muslims and drive them from Lisbon. As a reward Afonso gave the English Almada Castle. This feat of arms, mentioned in *Os Lusíadas* (3:57-60) and complemented by the story of the Twelve of England in canto 6, inspires Mickle's "patriot rage": "To ancient English valour sacred still / Remains, and ever shall, Almada Hill / ... And here, my Friend, how many a trophy woos / The Briton's earnest eye, and British Muse!" (4, 20). Surveying the city and country spread out before him, the poet enjoys a vision of past and future. The fall of the Portuguese empire may be "Prophetic of the kindred fate that lowers, / O'er Albion's fleets and London's proudest towers" (22). Yet he also beholds "the returning day / Of Lisboa's honours, fairer than her prime / Lost by a rude unletter'd Age's crime";

"Camoens' Ghost no more / Wails the neglected Muse on Tago's shore" (32, 33). Mickle sees hope and freedom in Portugal's future.

To some extent he even manages to substitute his cherished myth of Lusitanian destiny for what is before his eyes. No uninformed reader would learn that Portugal had lately suffered the most notorious dictatorship in Europe. The beautiful city that Mickle so admires, reconstructed after the earthquake of 1755, was the showcase of the Marquês de Pombal, who used it to impress visitors and justify his reign of terror. Pombal had fallen two years earlier, and the nation was still preoccupied by charges against him.²⁹ But Mickle sympathized with the broken ruler, to whom he had sent an obsequious letter praising "your Lordship's indefatigable care in reviving the ancient virtues and glories of your country," and to whose home he made a pilgrimage in 1780.³⁰ At least Pombal had not neglected the muses. Moreover, Mickle himself witnessed a renewed Portuguese interest in letters when he attended the formal opening of the Royal Academy of Sciences, which had elected him a corresponding member. But the immediate source of his vision of Portuguese freedom is a profound anxiety about his native land. Britain "is sick and poisoned at the heart" (3), torn by faction and threatened by the loss of her empire. America, the other home of so many Scots, has broken away from "the grand design / Of parent heaven, that shore to shore should join / In bands of mutual aid, from sky to sky, / And Ocean's wildest waves the chain supply" (20). At this desperate moment, the resurrection of Portugal comes to the rescue. Here commerce, civilization, and liberty are once more alive, and so is *Os Lusíadas* (Mickle's own work had rekindled Portuguese interest in Camões). Here poets are now appreciated. The long view from Almada Hill restores his faith.

Hence the myth of one nation refashions itself in another. Yet what Camões transmitted to Mickle was not so much the destiny of his nation as its deep-seated contradictions. The sense of grievance that runs through *Os Lusíadas*, forever coloring its bold heroic adventures, also shadows Anglicized Scotland and its epics of commerce. In retrospect da Gama's voyage already contains a pang of loss, as the poet broods on his own decay and that of his country. The poems of Ossian, which still haunt Scotland, consist of nothing but loss. And even an enlightened Briton like Mickle, in love with progress and keeping his distance from old Scottish ways, cannot shake off the fear that his adopted ship of state is foundering. Nations, Benedict Anderson tells us, are largely invented by exiles, who preserve the homeland from afar as a

dream.³¹ Thus Camões's great poem of exile, "By the Rivers of Babylon," assimilates Portugal to Zion or heaven so thoroughly that, even syntactically, it is hard to tell one from the other. The real Portugal, revisited, was bound to be disappointing. Nor could Mickle ever go home again to the ideal he had imagined. Significantly, *Almada Hill* concludes not with Britannia, the fashionable imperial goddess, but rather with Albion, the primordial myth whose origins always lie shrouded in the past (in legend Albion was inhabited only by giants until Brutus arrived and named it Britain). Such myths remind the poet that nothing lasts. Similarly, Camões and his nation survive in Lisbon only as ghosts.³² The dream of a world united by commerce, a dream that Captain Cook was helping to realize even as Mickle wrote his *Lusiad*, struggles against the current of the epic, forever mourning the bygone heroic days. The voyages of poets and nations circle toward home, like Ulysses, yet find that all is not well there. The ghost of Camões still wails.

Notes

¹ R. P. Blackmur, *A Primer of Ignorance*, ed. Joseph Frank (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1967) 85.

² C. M. Bowra, *From Virgil to Milton* (London: Macmillan, 1945) 138.

³ Luis de Camões, *The Lusiad: or, The discovery of India. An epic poem*, trans. William Julius Mickle, 3rd ed. (London: T. Cadell jun. and W. Davies, 1798) 2:20. The parallel is Pope's *Iliad*, 15:844-53. Cf. the earlier battle in *Os Lusíadas*, 3:52, whose horrors are also softened by Mickle (for instance, he deletes the "palpitating entrails"); 1:104-5.

⁴ For variants of this anecdote see Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (New York: Norton, 1985) 877.

⁵ Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1992) 189.

⁶ As Portuguese scholars noted at the time, Mickle's most obvious departure from the text he translates is his explicit anti-catholicism.

⁷ See Neil Larson and Robert Krueger, "Homer, Vergil, Camões," *I & L: Ideologies and Literature* 2:10 (1979): 69-94.

⁸ Opposing sides of this debate are represented by Murray Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland* (London: Routledge, 1991), and Neil Davidson, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood* (London: Pluto, 2000).

⁹ "One way or another, the question of *Ossian's* authenticity will always refuse to go away"; Joep Leerssen, "Ossianic Liminality: Between Native Tradition and Preromantic Taste," in *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations*, ed. Fiona Stafford and Howard Gaskill (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998) 1. Mickle's own writings ridicule the claim that Ossian is authentic.

¹⁰ James Macpherson, "A Dissertation" (1765), *The Poems of Ossian*, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996) 206.

¹¹ Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689-c.1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), views James Macpherson himself as "a sophisticated and latitudinarian Scottish whig" (223).

¹² Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), argues that Macpherson "improves" the ancient poetry of the Highlands in accord with genteel modern Scottish tastes. "In so far as the matter of Ossian is the erasure of regional or national identity by metropolitan cultural and economic power, the poems do not resist or even lament the process so much as form a part of it" (107).

¹³ The standard life remains John Sim's, in his edition of Mickle's *Poetical Works* (London: Printed by J. Barfield and sold by H. D. Symonds, 1806), but there are some inaccuracies. 1734, the birth date given by Sim, is accepted by M. Eustace Taylor, *William Julius Mickle (1734-1788): A Critical Study* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America, 1937).

¹⁴ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992) 117-32.

¹⁵ Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934) 4:250.

¹⁶ Samuel Johnson, *A Voyage to Abyssinia*, ed. Joel J. Gold (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985) xlii-xlvii, liii-lvi. Lobo's *Itinerário* was probably written in 1639-40; Johnson relied on a 1728 French translation.

¹⁷ *The World Displayed* (1759), in *Samuel Johnson's Prefaces & Dedications*, ed. Allen T. Hazen (New Haven: Yale UP, 1937) 228.

¹⁸ James Thomson, "Summer," *The Seasons* (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1746) ll. 1005-12.

¹⁹ *Liberty* 5:73-76.

²⁰ *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987) 629. The essay dates from 1748; the note was added in 1753-54.

²¹ The lines quoted, from "To my Lord of Falkland" (1639), celebrate the expedition of Falkland and the Earl of Holland against "our proud neighbors" the Scots.

²² *Life of Johnson* 2:155.

²³ "Taxation No Tyranny" (1775), in Johnson's *Political Writings*, ed. Donald J. Greene (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977) 454.

²⁴ See Monica Letzring, "Mickle, Boswell, Liberty, and the 'Prospects of Liberty and of Slavery,'" *Modern Language Review* 69 (1974): 489-500. Mickle sketched the "Prospects" in a letter to Boswell (8 July 1768), *The General Correspondence of James Boswell, 1766-1769*, ed. Richard C. Cole (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997) 2:78-80.

²⁵ On Portuguese attitudes toward Africans and Amerindians, see C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825* (London: Hutchinson, 1969) chs. 4 and 11.

²⁶ *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations* (1776), ed. Edwin Cannan (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976) 2:146-58.

²⁷ Mickle had once hoped for employment in the East India Company, where he had friends and relatives. As a professed enemy of Smith's friend David Hume, he also wrote some verses of a satiric "Heroic Epistle from Mr. Hume in the Shades to Dr. Adam Smith," emphasizing that both were lost in "wild and unfounded Theories." Mickle's strictures on Smith are included in a work attributed to James Macpherson, *A Candid Examination of the Reasons for Depriving the East-India Company of its Charter* (London: J. Bew and J. Sewell, 1779), which argues that the very measures recommended for India by Smith had precipitated the American Revolution.

²⁸ Mickle's "History of the Rise and Fall of the Portuguese Empire in the East" most likely alludes to another work published in 1776, the first volume of Gibbon's *History of the Decline*

and *Fall of the Roman Empire*. As an empire that, unlike Portugal, has civilized its colonies through *law*, Britain is associated with Virgil's ideal of Rome.

²⁹ Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal, Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 149-58.

³⁰ S. George West, *The Visit to Portugal in 1779-1780 of William Julius Mickle, Translator of Os Lusíadas* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1972). The letter, which accompanied a presentation copy of *The Lusiad* in 1776, is printed in English and Portuguese by Sousa Viterbo, *Uma Carta de William Julius Mickle ao Marquez de Pombal* (Porto: Typ. de José da Silva Mendonça, 1893). Printed by Sousa Viterbo.

³¹ Benedict Anderson, "Exodus," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Winter 1994): 314-27.

³² Mickle registers his haunting by the ghost of Camões in a sonnet, "On passing the Bridge of Alcantara, near Lisbon, where Camoens is reported to have chosen his station when age and necessity compelled him to beg his daily sustenance": "Twas night: with cheerless look / Methought he bow'd his head in languid mood, / As pale with penury in darkling nook / Forlorn he watch'd ..."; *Poetical Works* 147.

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Milton and Camões: Reinventing the Old Man

Balachandra Rajan

If we are to study the status of Camões in a post-imperial world one overwhelming question needs to be asked. How does the poem now look to a citizen of those territories that *The Lusiads* made into the emblems of Portuguese glory? The banners of Camões's vision (seen from a hilltop similar to the one on which Christ in *Paradise Regained* refused the kingdoms of the world)¹ are no longer to be seen on Asian soil. But more than the banners have vanished. Independence also means the independence of the Asian reader to assess the poem against his own history. If Camões is a world-poet, what are the terms of a global understanding about him or, more tentatively, the terms of that conversation within which such an understanding might be sought?

It is twenty-five years since Edward Said's *Orientalism* reconfigured our perception of inter-cultural relationships. Post-colonialism at its outset lacked historical depth, assuming disarmingly that the world began with Kipling. In the years that followed it has reached back to the time of Columbus and Vasco da Gama, demonstrating that its patterns of perception can indeed engage historically distant periods with the present and can give to the term "early modern" a significance that is penetrating rather than polemical. In the process the canon, which might be taken to be imperialism's steadfast stronghold, has been shown to be heavily conflicted and to be built around fault lines that oblige it to struggle with itself. Voices of protest are prominent in *The Lusiads* and might be taken to be evidence of these fault lines, and yet, paradoxically, they are prominent because the poem seems determined to deny them entry. Moreover they are dismissive rather than disarticulating. It

is not easy to make them the revisionary centre of a work that stubbornly remains the most triumphalist of Western epics.

Not all differences in poems lead to openings around which the poem can be rearticulated. Helgerson, for example, treats *The Lusiads* as a heroic poem of Portuguese nationhood² whereas Mickle, its eighteenth-century translator, describes it as "the epic poem of the birth of commerce, and, in a particular manner, the epic poem of whatever country has the control and possession of the commerce of India."³ In finding Mickle's reading "bizarre," Helgerson accounts for it by assigning it to a different reading climate, a different position on the "hermeneutic spiral."⁴ We in our time occupy yet another location on that spiral from which another view of *The Lusiads* needs to be launched. I leave aside this principal item on our agenda for the moment in order to point out that Mickle's allegedly "bizarre" view is not without roots in the text. Epic catalogues in the later books of *The Lusiads* are catalogues of spices, not heroes. One might argue that the commercial and the heroic run convergent courses that meet in today's global economy where the bottom line has been elevated to transcendence and where CEOs are either deified or satanized. To say this is only to remind the Asian reader that commerce and the pursuit of imperial glory have colluded persistently and with deplorable results. The aristocratic/middle-class distinction that separated the two in the sixteenth century seems less a debate about the imperial mission than a division of labour in its implementation. It does not offer the solace of a fault line around which the poem can be rebuilt.

A post-imperial era is not simply an era of vanishing empires. It is also a time in which others hitherto ventriloquized can speak as themselves and not be heard simply in allotted voices that they can do no more than modulate by their own voices of protest. When the constraints of a dominant discourse are removed, the line of the unacceptable will be drawn more firmly and deeply. Occasions for the willing suspension of disbelief will become less profuse. We can no longer leave our ideologies in the cloakroom as we enter the literary seminar. Some things that have been said cannot be lived with even in the name of literature. Perhaps we can live with them in the name of history. We then reduce them to documentary status. Another possibility is to estrange them and to ask ourselves what we learn from the estrangement. There can be both dissociation and connectedness as we negotiate the line of cleavage and joining. Historicizing the unfamiliar can become a crude, polemical tactic when civilizations of today are dismissed as mediaeval. It is a different matter when Milton pushes historicization to its limits by making the

principles of ideal order Edenic. The Fall is the maximum estrangement. We are the total other of our origins. The fissure is the poem and we read the poem along changing approaches because so much can be poured into the fissure.

The Lusiads is not a poem into which the human condition can be emptied. I would say this of the *Mahabharata* but in the western world there may be only one such poem. *The Lusiads* is less capacious than *Paradise Lost* and perhaps for that reason less riven within itself. Like the *Aeneid*, to which it alludes eighty times and claims to surpass, it is the story of a dangerous voyage, but a voyage in the bronze world of reality rather than the golden one of poetic feigning.⁵ Unlike the *Aeneid*, *The Lusiads* is not the narrative of a dispossessed people, journeying across strange seas to establish a new homeland. That story should be familiar in New England and I am sometimes surprised that the *Aeneid* is not the American epic. The waste of war, the weariness of wandering, and the tragic cost of destiny suffuse the Virgilian hexameter, the “stateliest measure,” according to Tennyson, “ever moulded by the lips of man.”⁶ There is enough in the poem to turn it against its *telos* for those wishing to doubt the imperial enterprise.

The Lusiads is more self-confident than the *Aeneid*. It has to be confident because it is more than the epic of Portugal. It is the poem of the early modern movement.⁷ It offers us a beginning and beginnings can be peremptorily clear. They can also be tentative, wrapped in ambivalences and offering multiple routes out of their nuclei whose consequences can diverge and entwine. *The Lusiads* is in the former category. Bold beginnings often leave something behind, such as an old man on the seashore. He speaks with wisdom as the narrator notes, but wisdom falters as the paradigm shifts. It is a shift that in its nature has to be peremptory, that must ignore rather than take in the Old Man, that must refrain from engaging itself with the world-view it abandons. Misgivings can only come later, as the shift opens itself to the consequences that its initial clarity elides.

Early modernism is marked by competing nascent empires. Commerce with Cathay and curiosity about the Far East’s fabled civilizations were the motives for Columbus’s westward voyage. When the New World came in the way, conquest, plunder, and settlement became agreeable options. In the East, the military balance of power made regime change impractical. Since Portugal was given the East by papal dispensation,⁸ commerce had to be the prize, along with glory, establishing links with distant Christian communities including the elusive Prester John, and converting infidels in whom the East

abounded. Vasco da Gama's voyage was an audacious move, typical of an exuberant nationhood, eager to assume a world destiny. Commerce with the East had been in existence for centuries but it had been largely Arab-controlled, moving along the Silk Road and through ports on the Arabian Sea to Venice. Da Gama's mission was to open a sea route to the Indies that would undermine the Venetian dominance and break open the Arab grip on commerce between Asia and Europe. The Old Man had said that if glory was important, Portugal should seek it in battle with the traditional enemies of Christendom. He was not thinking of economic victories that were to count as much in the future as military triumphs. Da Gama's voyage was not simply from Lisbon to Calicut but from a pre-modern to an early modern world-view.

The cost of the voyage was high and its tactics were daring. They involved plunging West where the shoreline of Africa turns East and journeying deep into the Atlantic before making the turn that would enable trade winds to carry the three ships to the Cape.⁹ Da Gama's men were out of sight of land for ninety-six days. Though the epic does not suggest this, the passage from the Cape to India was less of an advance into the unknown. Commerce between India and the Eastern African and Arabian coasts had been intensely active for centuries. Another Braudel is needed to write the history of the world of the Indian Ocean.¹⁰ Da Gama's difficulties were further eased by the services of an experienced pilot who may have been the legendary Ibn Majid.¹¹

Nevertheless one third to one half of Da Gama's men did not return to Portugal. When Camões set sail for Goa fifty-five years later in a flotilla of four ships, three were lost on the way out and the one remaining did not survive the return journey. The cost was higher than in the Second World War when German submarines operating from Dakar preyed upon Allied shipping obliged to take the Cape route.

A cost-benefit analysis may seem beside the point in circumstances where international standing among empires was more important than the return on venture capital. It can be observed, nevertheless, that the Portuguese bid for eminence, both commercially and in world imperial rankings, was, at the outset, spectacularly successful. Albuquerque had prophesied that if a sea-route to the Indies was opened, "Cairo and Mecca will be entirely ruined, and to Venice will no spices be conveyed except what her merchants go and buy in Portugal."¹² By the early sixteenth century seventy-five percent of spices from the East were arriving in Portuguese vessels and profits of ninety percent were being reaped.

The moment passed almost as soon as it materialized. Portugal lacked the money and the ships to maintain the dizzying reach of its imperial design. The blockade of Arab ports could not be maintained and the loss of skilled manpower on dangerous voyages took a toll that became increasingly hard to sustain. By the end of the century Portugal's share in the pepper trade fell to a mere twenty percent. Aden could not be captured and Ormuz, the emporium of the Orient, was taken from the Portuguese in 1622. Even more devastating was an ill-fated military expedition to Moorish Africa launched in June 1578 with considerable pomp and circumstance. In five hours of battle under a searing sun the flower of Portugal's manhood was destroyed. Eight thousand men were killed and fifteen thousand taken prisoner. No more than a hundred found their way back to Portugal. Camões, with the deathbed wit that was part of his time's tragic gaiety, remarked that he was glad to perish not only in but also with his country.

Camões must have been aware of Portugal's decline at the time he wrote *The Lusiads*. We have to ask ourselves to what extent that awareness is taken into his poem. We could have had a poem that was elegiac rather than triumphalist. We could even have had a poem that foresaw in Portugal's decline, the eventual dubiousness of the imperial enterprise. It is obvious that we do not have either. Doubts about the imperial mission are expressed in *The Lusiads* but they are marginalized in relation to a triumphalist core. They circulate at the fringes of an undertaking that seems determined not to allow them into its space. Attempts have been made to move them closer to the centre and indeed revisionary readings of *The Lusiads* are heavily dedicated to such attempts. They seem to me to skew the poem immoderately.

Skewed interpretations are the order of the day. When literary texts make statements we find difficult to accept, we search for and foreground the text's anxieties so that the statements are undermined, or at least contested. We do so with the justification that this is how the text reaches out to its future. We want to think of a poem that endures as resisting its own indoctrination, as not being able to avoid its honesty. Literature could not be heard with involvement outside the auditory in which it was first performed if we did not listen to its contrapuntal music. Skewed readings are needed but skewing beyond a certain point is willful rather than accommodative. Disputes can and do occur about the permissible degree of reorientation but I remain persuaded that efforts to reconstitute the poem around the Old Man's harangue pull it too far away from its anchorage.

Among reflections on *The Lusiads*'s self-dismissals, an article by Jack Tomlins is particularly interesting. He argues that Camões after his return from India "saw the Oriental conquest—with India as the brightest diamond in the crown—as mere vanity and total ruin." The opening dedication, the Old Man's rebuke, and the disillusioned envoi of the epic were all composed after the poet's return and reflect this deep change in understanding. The poem thus "flies apart at three junctures" undoing "the very business of the epic."¹³ Tomlin's recuperation *via* chronology can only be conjectural and is not supported by any evidence except the desirability of the recuperative arrangement. Nevertheless it concedes the marginality of the poem's misgivings about itself. His argument is that the marginality is the result of the recantations coming too late to enter a central space already occupied by a previous poem. If so, the two poems are simply not sufficiently engaged for them to fly apart. What we have is a collision rather than a critique.

Our difficulty is that the counter-voice in the poem must be more than merely dismissive. It has to provide the basis for a revisionary turn within the poem itself. The Old Man is not saying that a different version of *The Lusiads* ought to be written. He is arguing that the epic should not be written at all.¹⁴ If, as I have already argued, Da Gama's voyage is to be seen not just as a voyage from Lisbon to Calicut but as an opening up of the early modern world, the Old Man's speech may have to be deposited in what Hegel derisively called the lumber room of history. In fact the Old Man is advocating almost that abandonment of history that the last books of *Paradise Lost* were once chided for embodying.

A protesting voice is needed but its location has to be different. It has to come out of the world the poem sails into rather than from the world it leaves behind. Milton more than any other poet seems to me to initiate this voice.

Milton does not mention Camões but books have been written about Milton's relationship with authors he did not mention. J.H. Sims's many articles show that the connection of *The Lusiads* with *Paradise Lost* is more substantial than the two alliterative reminiscences that can be heard in Milton's poem.¹⁵ *Paradise Lost* actually lies in close chronological proximity not to *The Lusiads*, but to its first English translation by Richard Fanshawe, which was not published until 1655. A blind poet growing older, who had given his best years to a faltering revolution, might well have remembered a marginal voice on a receding shoreline. Milton does indeed step into the Old Man's shoes but the man in the shoes is imperiously Milton.

Commerce and empire are blended in the beginnings of early modernism from which they flow their consummation into today's globalism and the imperial power of the consumer ethos. Columbus's voyage and Da Gama's embrace the world between them. The world we live in is the result of that dubious embrace. The Old Man can say nothing about the synergy between commerce and empire because he does not speak out of the early modern moment. Milton begins his detection of that synergy with a famous speech by Comus that can be read as a prospectus for Da Gama's voyage.¹⁶ The lady replies by counselling temperance, and talk about temperance can be tedious, particularly for those who wish to find commendations of temperance sustained paradoxically by the plentitude of language. This is a difficulty Milton often confronts. Temperance becomes more acceptable when it is metamorphosed into the collective self-restraint that is necessary to safeguard our planet.

In *Paradise Lost* the argument against the early modern synergy is more clearly focused and driven with greater sternness. Satan is the original imperialist and his journey from Hell to Paradise, laden with evocations of the spice trade,¹⁷ is the infernal matrix of the heroic-commercial quest. The argumentative thrust is even clearer in the quite different accounts of forbidden fruit consumption provided in *Areopagitica* and in *Paradise Lost*. The prose tract tells us that the knowledge of good and evil leaped into the world "from out the rinde of one apple tasted."¹⁸ *Paradise Lost* has none of this delicate nibbling. Eve does not tentatively puncture the rind of an apple. She eats it rind and all. In fact, she seems to eat several apples. Having done so, she tears off a branch from the tree and carries it to Adam who after some hesitation shares with her the delights of unrestricted apple eating. None of this staging is to be found in Genesis or in any commentary that I know of on Genesis. Pleasing and sating the "curious taste" is, in Comus's perverse ecological reasoning, not merely a right but a responsibility bestowed upon us by earth's abundance.¹⁹ In *Paradise Lost* the justification for unrestricted consumption is embedded in our origins and carried to its lethal extreme.

The Old Man does suggest that original sin lies at the root of Da Gama's enterprise but he suggests this as part of the vaguely inclusive proposition that all mistaken undertakings are the result of original sin. He can say no more because he is on the wrong side of an historical divide. His is a discourse no longer relevant. The poem, to form itself, must move away from that discourse. Milton can say more because he is speaking from within the discourse that *The Lusiads* authenticates. One hundred and seventy-five years of early

modernism generate a critique that can be planted with precision not merely in the cultural stipulations of the moment but more fundamentally in the deep-rooted propensity to destructiveness that is so stubbornly part of the nature of our beginnings.

The Old Man's remarks on the vanity of human endeavour are more difficult to sharpen and direct. Augustine touches a responsive chord in Milton. Yet despite the almost overwhelming presence of the weight of woe within it, *Paradise Lost* is pledged to history as the Old Man's declamation is not. Even that classical heroism that is denounced as the poet tunes his note to "tragic" is embodied in a splendour of language that reinstates what it rejects and that Milton cannot quite bring to the "better fortitude."²⁰ The poet against empire writes a poem that is resplendently imperial, commanding and directing the history of Western literature into a work seeking to contain a history that rages against the borders of poetic form, as chaos did until it was compelled into order. *Paradise Lost* does not turn its back on history. History is its theme and its obsession. As a poem containing history (the phrase is Ezra Pound's)²¹ it has to proceed on the premise that history can be comprehended through containment, that it can be written and not merely endured, that its creative promise will prevail over its tragic momentum. But the conditions for that writing, the sweeping aside of all collective action until the rebellious self is fully aligned with the divine, will constitute a deferral as destructive as the premature action it bleakly anatomizes. The powerful foregrounding of fallenness does not sufficiently address a spectrum of religious and moral understandings that are with us today and in which fallenness does not play a crucial part. In a post-imperial world the time has come for the critique to be critiqued.

To conclude, I regard *The Lusiads* as a quintessential poem of the early modern moment. Its self-confidence is part of the moment's character. Protests against that self-confidence are driven to the poem's margins and essentialized to a point where they no longer seem pertinent. In recording a historical event *The Lusiads* is itself an event in cultural history, an intervention that shifts the parameters of debate. That debate remains in progress today.

Asian readers resent the commercial emphasis of *The Lusiads* and the trivial commodifications that resolutely bypass all that Asian civilizations have offered to world understanding. Yet that very reductiveness leads into and underlines the impoverishments of the economic universalism now being put forward as our final paradigm. It also advises us that commerce is the ally of

imperialism, not its replacement. The synergy between the two, which *The Lusiads* is so prophetic in making evident, will not be dismantled simply by being globalized. It will be dismantled only by commitment to a universalism adequately in accordance with human dignity, worth, and aspirations. Previous universalisms have built themselves on concerns more elevated than the profit principle. The Enlightenment offered us a world governed by universal reason free from the selectiveness imposed by a right-reason that had to be reconstructed from the debris of fallenness and that therefore had to be theologically certified. We need to proceed further into a world which is governed by conscience as well as by reason, a world in which to modulate Shelley's description of the poetic imagination "the pains and pleasures of the species must become [man's] own."²² Today we are threatened by citizenship of a world order in which what cannot be commodified does not exist. We are at the end of Da Gama's journey. Once again the Old Man needs to be reinvented but in a manner that speaks specifically to our time as well as more amply to eternity.

Notes

¹ Camões, *The Lusiads* 10, 77. All references to *The Lusiads* are to the translation by Leonard Bacon (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1950). The mountain that Christ ascends (*PR* 3, 251-66) is specifically compared to the highest hill in the Paradise (*PL* 11, 377-82) from which Adam views the havoc wrought by his fall. Characteristically the approach to the hill of vision in *The Lusiads* is strewn with emeralds and rubies.

² Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992) 155-76, 189-90.

³ William Julius Mickle, *The Lusiad or The Discovery of India: an Epic Poem* (Oxford: Jackman and Lister, 1776) cxlvii.

⁴ Helgerson 190.

⁵ Camões does argue that the bronze world of his poem is as exemplary as the golden and has the added advantage of being actual rather than fictive.

⁶ "To Virgil," *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Longmans Green 1969) 1313.

⁷ Early modernism is associated with the emergence of the nation-state, the rise of the middle class, the development of a capitalist economy, and the collusion of commerce and empire.

⁸ Under the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494. The absence of a reliable computation of longitude led to complications. See J.R. Hall, *Renaissance Exploration* (New York: Norton, 1968) 45.

⁹ See, e.g., Hall, *Renaissance Exploration*, pp. 29-45. Developing the "wind route" was important because shorter and more predictable travel times would lead to higher profits. Da Gama's ships (unlike Columbus's) were specifically built to provide the maximum carrying capacity consistent with seaworthiness.

¹⁰ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, trans. Sean Reynolds, illustrated edn. (New York: Harper Collins, 1992). An important beginning in this direction has been made in K.N. Chaudhari's *Asia before Europe: Economy and Civilization of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990). It is carried further in Richard Hall's superb *Empire of the Monsoon* (London: Harper Collins 1996; paperback edn. 1998).

¹¹ G.V. Scammell confidently identifies the pilot as Ibn Majid, "the most distinguished navigator of the time." *The World Encompassed: the First European Maritime Empire c. 800-1650* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1981) 235. See also J.R. Hall 40. Portuguese sources describe him as the "Moor of Gujarat" and as Maleme, Cana or Canaqua (Captain Astrologer). It is hard to think of a Moslem pilot helping the Portuguese to destroy the very monopoly from which he himself was profiting. These difficulties are taken into account by Richard Hall 179-83, who nevertheless concludes that Ibn Majid was the pilot.

¹² As quoted in Ramakrishna Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1973) 100.

¹³ Jack E. Tomlins, "Gil Vicente's Vision of India and Its Ironic Echo in Camões 'Velho de Rosselo,'" *Empire in Transition: The Portuguese World in The Times of Camões*, ed. Alfred Hower and Richard A. Preso-Rodas (Gainesville: U of Florida P, Center for Latin American Studies, 1985) 170-76.

¹⁴ Old Man could be read as voicing the conservative opposition to the king, particularly in his view that reformation at home was more important than adventures abroad. This is a stereotypical caution against expansionist enterprises that must be made specific to be effective. Instead it becomes lost by being distanced into fundamentalist statements about original sin and the vanity of human endeavour. The declamation takes in prevailing misgivings but it takes them in through a rhetoric designed to be dismissed.

¹⁵ James H. Sims, "Camões' *Lusiads* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Satan's Voyage to Eden," *Papers on Milton*, ed. Philip M. Griffith and Lester F. Zimmerman (Tulsa: U of Tulsa P, 1969) 36-46; "Echoes of Camoens' *Lusiads* in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (I-IV)," *Revista Camonianiana*, 3 (1971): 135-44; "Camoens, Milton, and Myth in the Christian Epic," *Renaissance Papers* (1972): 79-87; "Christened Classicism in *Paradise Lost* and the *Lusiads*," *Comparative Literature* 24 (1972): 338-56; "'Delicious Paradise' in *Os Lusíadas* and in *Paradise Lost*," *Ocidente* (Lisbon), Num. especial (Nov 1972): 163-72; "The Epic Narrator's Mortal Voice in Camões and Milton," *Revue de Literature Comparée* 51 (1977): 377-84; "A Greater than Rome: The Conversion of a Virgilian Symbol from Camões to Milton," *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth*, ed. P.A. Ramsey (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1982) 334-44; "Milton as a Camoist," *Performance for a Lifetime: A Festschrift Honoring Dorothy Harrell Brown: Essays on Women, Religion, and the Renaissance*, ed. Barbara C. Ewell, Mary A. McCay, Georgiann L. Potts (New Orleans, LA: Loyola U, New Orleans, 1997) 205-22; "Os Lusíadas: A Structural Prototype of *Paradise Lost*," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 4 (1978): 70-75. The alliterative reminiscences are in *PL* 2, 639 and *PL* 11, 399.

¹⁶ *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* 705-754. J. Martin Evans shows how "Comus's great hymn to Nature's fecundity" reflects encounters with the New World. *Milton's Imperial Epic: "Paradise Lost" and the Discourse of Colonialism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1996) 47-50.

¹⁷ See in particular, *PL* 2, 636-43.

¹⁸ *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Volume 2, ed. Ernest Sirluck (New Haven: Yale UP, 1959) 314. Comus's "curious taste" is taken up in the tasting of the apple but uninhibited consumption is here shrunk to a tentativeness that underlines the drama of the sentence as the twins leap explosively into the world. Syntactic deferrals add to the suspense of the drama.

¹⁹ It is remarkable how the sheer perversity of the argument is ignored by admirers of Comus's eloquence. If the firmament displays the glory of its maker it is so that we can treat it with a sense of reverence.

²⁰ *PL* 9, 1-41.

²¹ Ezra Pound, *Make it New* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934) 86. Interview with Donald Hall, *Pan's Review*, 1962. See also Balachandra Rajan, *The Form of the Unfinished* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985) 288.

²² Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* in *A Defence of Poetry; The Four Ages of Poetry*, ed. John E. Jordan (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965) 40.

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First Encounter: the Christian-Hindu Confusion When the Portuguese Reached India

Michael Murrin

Abstract. It is well known that Vasco da Gama and the men in his fleet thought the Hindus they met in Calicut were Christians and so reported their opinions to D. Manuel on their return. Early historians tried to explain this mistake away, and Camões simply erased it. It is not so well known that the confusion was mutual, for the Hindus thought the Portuguese were Hindus. I try to explain why this massive confusion occurred and then draw some reflections from the event including a discussion of Camões's very negative description of the temple outside Calicut where Gama and his associates worshipped.

In *Marvelous Possessions* Stephen Greenblatt discusses the first encounter between Spaniards and the Indians of Mesoamerica. He uses for this purpose probably the most famous of the chroniclers, Bernal Díaz, who shows the wonder the Spanish explorers felt, climbing their first Mayan temple in the Yucatan:

They led us to some large houses very well built of masonry which were the Temples of their Idols, and on the walls were figured the bodies of many great serpents and snakes and other pictures of evil-looking Idols. These walls surrounded a sort of Altar covered with clotted blood. On the other side of the Idols were symbols like crosses, and all were coloured. At all this we stood wondering, as they were things never seen or heard of before. (*The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* 1.19)¹

Greenblatt goes on to argue that the wonder Bernal Diaz stresses covers over a disturbing resemblance to his own religion: "temple, high altar, cult of holy blood, statues before which offerings are made, 'symbols like crosses.'" ² Wonder breaks the sense of recognition and allows the future conqueror to dismiss the Mayan temple as alien. In contrast the Portuguese in their first encounter with Hindus at Calicut or Kozhikode did not wonder because they made almost a complete religious identification of themselves with the Hindus. They never realized the Hindus were not Christians, nor during their visit of some months was the illusion ever dispelled. On their return to Lisbon the leaders of the expedition still identified Hindus as Christians, and King Manuel believed them. ³ He informed the Cardinal Protector and, therefore, the Pope that the ruler of Calicut and the greater part of his people held themselves Christians. He did have some reservations, which he expressed to the rulers of Castile, Isabella and Ferdinand. He wrote that the Indians were not so confirmed in faith nor did they have a complete understanding of Christianity. In fact, they really did no more than most infidels, nor did they follow even what they understood by their tradition. The king believed then that Da Gama had found defective Christians, but Christians nonetheless, who must be purified. ⁴ One wants to ask how such a massive confusion could occur and why, but the facts must come first.

The Portuguese had known beforehand that Christians lived in India. A steady trickle of medieval reports, some like that of Marco Polo widely disseminated, attested to the presence of Nestorian Christians on the subcontinent. ⁵ The Portuguese themselves had recent information about India. Fra Mauro of Murano, who made a map for them (1456-60), incorporated into it the narrative of Nicolo Conti, who had visited India earlier in the century and had reached Vijayanagar, the Hindu capital of the South. Then the Portuguese sent east their own agent, Pero da Covilhã (1487-91), who reached Goa and later had a Jew in Cairo carry back his report to the Portuguese king. It is doubtful, however, that the report reached the king. ⁶ Reasonably well informed, nevertheless, the Portuguese sailed east, looking for Christians, but went to the wrong places like Calicut and misidentified the people they met. In Da Gama's case one could say that previous information led to misinformation.

For the voyage itself the man who kept a journal provides the evidence, and he shows that the confusion was mutual. The Hindus thought the Portuguese were Hindus. ⁷ The confusion began on the east coast of Africa, the *contracosta*.

The first time the Portuguese were skeptical. At Mombasa, a port city now in Kenya, the ruler sent two messengers to Da Gama with gifts. They were almost white and claimed to be Christians. The Portuguese then sent two of their own into town to visit the house of these Christian merchants, who had a paper sketch of the Holy Spirit. The explorer, Richard Burton, suggested that they saw the pigeon god-goddess Kapot-eshwar, an incarnation of Shiva and Parvati, his wife.⁸ The author of the *Roteiro* decided, however, that it was a lie. The Portuguese saw many people in irons there and concluded these were the real Christians (*Roteiro* 45-48; *Journal* 6, 38-39). They had been accustomed to Christian prisoners held for ransom in Morocco and had found some previously at Mozambique, the island port to the south.⁹

They changed their minds in Malindi, the port immediately north of Mombasa, and here the confusion involved both sides (*Roteiro* 48, 51-52; *Journal* 40, 44-45). They were told four Christian Indian vessels were in harbor that could provide pilots.¹⁰ The people who visited Paolo da Gama's ship prayed before an altarpiece of Mary, embracing Christ at the foot of the cross, surrounded by apostles.¹¹ The visitors prostrated themselves and offered cloves, pepper, and other spices. The author of the *Roteiro*, who was present on the ship, noted that they ate no beef. Next, when Vasco da Gama went towards town, the sailors on the four vessels shot guns and cried "Christ!" Burton thinks they actually shouted "Krishna!"¹² This attitude of the Indians, perhaps, helps to explain the initial reception the Portuguese had at Calicut.

The first thing Vasco da Gama and his party were asked to do and did as they entered Calicut was to worship in two Hindu temples. The *Roteiro* provides an eyewitness account and gives a detailed description of the first temple (*Roteiro* 58-59; *Journal* 52-55). The author says the body of the "church" was as large as a monastery, built of stone and covered with tiles. Two pillars stood at the main entrance. One was of bronze as high as a mast with a cock on the top, which was for Christians a familiar symbol of the resurrection.¹³ The other pillar was shorter, a man's height,¹⁴ and along the outside walls hung seven small bells.¹⁵ Painted on the walls inside were saints, wearing crowns, and there was a chapel in the center with a spire on top.¹⁶ The chapel, like the church, was of stone and raised on a platform, approached by steps, and had a bronze door. The Hindus said it contained a statue of Our Lady or Mary, and Goes later claimed that four priests entered the chapel and said "Maria."¹⁷ These priests, actually Brahmans, alone might enter the shrine. The Portuguese knelt and said their prayers, while the Hindus pros-

trated themselves.¹⁸ The priest sprinkled them with holy water and gave them white earth, which the Hindus put on their foreheads, breasts, and around their necks and forearms. Vasco gave his earth to another, saying he would put it on later.¹⁹

The Portuguese stayed in Calicut more than two months, and all the quarreling with its ruler, the Samorim,²⁰ did not dispel this initial confusion. When the Portuguese discovered that their agents in town had been taken hostage, the author of the *Roteiro* lamented such treatment from a Christian king but blamed the Muslim traders, who had bribed him (*Roteiro* 73-74; *Journal* 71-72). Nor did the Portuguese journey up the coast afterward change their minds. On some islets, which they called Santa Maria,²¹ they wanted to erect a pillar of Santa Maria, and the locals, who had come to sell fish, approved the action, saying that it proved the Portuguese were Christians like them (*Roteiro* 81; *Journal* 80).²² The illusion continued to be mutual. Nor did the five persons kidnapped at Calicut and brought to Lisbon ever dispel it.²³

Two factors account for this massive confusion: restricted contact between the parties and the problem of go-betweens. The first of these grew out of Portuguese weakness. Sailing ships carried small crews. In their little fleet of three ships the Portuguese had initially but 150-170 men, little more than a single Mediterranean galley carried.²⁴ When they reached Mozambique, they had just lost thirty to scurvy, and most of the crew was ill. Few men were active even at Mombasa, their next stop (*Roteiro* 34, 45; *Journal* 20-21, 34-35). The clash at Mozambique had alienated the Muslim trading communities along the coast, and the Portuguese dared not take any chances. At Mombasa Da Gama learned that the Muslims intended to ambush them, once the ships entered the harbor (*Roteiro* 47; *Journal* 37). Consequently Da Gama took precautions before he entered a harbor for all his time in the Indian Ocean.

Malindi, their last stop on the African coast, was an affair of mutual distrust. The Portuguese anchored outside the harbor, but no one would approach their ships. The people at Malindi had heard that the Portuguese had captured a boat and imprisoned its people. Da Gama had to make the first gesture, and only after a peaceful reply did he move his ships closer. The meeting between the regent and Da Gama took place in long boats. Da Gama refused to go on land, and the regent did not board a Portuguese ship. Da Gama nevertheless released his prisoners and so won the guarded good-

will of the regent (*Roteiro* 48-50; *Journal* 39-42).²⁵ This was the friendliest reception the Portuguese found in the trading zone of the Indian Ocean.

At Calicut the Portuguese anchored again outside the harbor and initially allowed one sailor per ship to visit town, hence three altogether, where they were fed and put up, if they needed it (*Roteiro* 72; *Journal* 69). The people, in fact, were friendly, but once the Samorim turned against the Portuguese, they left but two factors with their goods in town. They were under much pressure to bring their ships into port, in which case they would have had to surrender their sails and rudders (*Roteiro* 69; *Journal* 64-66) and so would have been at the mercy of the Samorim. His agent, the *balé* or *catual*, demanded payment of harbor dues, even though the ships had not entered the harbor. At the same time the *balé* detained Da Gama and other Portuguese, beginning a game of kidnapping which marked the rest of their stay (*Roteiro* 66-68; *Journal* 64-67). Under such conditions neither side could have learned much about the other.

Even this limited contact had further limitations. The Portuguese needed pilots and go-betweens, though they did have in their company Fernão Martins, who spoke Arabic,²⁶ and whom Da Gama used for interviews with the Samorim (*Roteiro* 56 & n. 205, 61, 64; *Journal* 50 & n. 2; 57 & n. 2; 62). Martins, of course, could converse only with Arabic speakers, and they were all Muslim. After Mozambique the Portuguese were suspicious of Muslim pilots and interpreters. They flogged a pilot they picked up at Mozambique when he said some islands were the mainland (*Roteiro* 43; *Journal* 32).²⁷ At Mombasa two pilots jumped ship, and Da Gama tortured the other two that night, so they deserted (*Roteiro* 47; *Journal* 37). By then rough treatment had lost them all their pilots. At Malindi they asked for a Christian pilot (*Roteiro* 52; *Journal* 45-46) and got instead a Muslim native of Gujarat, whom they called Malema Cana or Canaque ("sailing master").²⁸ They were never able to get the Christian pilot they wanted, nor could they get a Christian interpreter for the Arabic version of the letter Vasco brought from the King of Portugal to the Samorim. Da Gama asked for one, but the Hindu could speak but not read Arabic, so four Muslims between themselves read and translated the letter before Da Gama and the Samorim (*Roteiro* 65; *Journal* 62-63). Yet Muslims often gave the Portuguese reliable information. The two Da Gama tortured at Mombasa revealed the plot to capture the Portuguese fleet in harbor, information immediately confirmed at midnight when they found swimmers at the *Berrio* trying to cut its cable (*Roteiro* 47; *Journal* 37). Similarly, the last pilot guided them expertly and safely to India.

Monçaide was the most famous of the go-betweens²⁹ and their indispensable ally in Calicut.³⁰ He came from Tunis and spoke Genoese and/or Castilian (*Roteiro* 54-55; *Journal* 48-49). Camões includes him in his epic and preserves the evidence. Monçaide went with Fernão Martins on the initial embassy to the Samorim.³¹ Privy to Muslim councils, he revealed to Da Gama their intent to detain the Portuguese at Calicut till the Mecca fleet arrived (Camões 9. 5-7) and arranged the purchase of pepper, mace, nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon, which back home would help prove Da Gama had reached India (9. 13-15). At the same time he functioned as a genuine go-between and provided the *balé* with information on the newcomers (7. 66-72). Yet, despite the fact that he sailed to Portugal with Da Gama, Monçaide never dispelled their illusion about the Hindus. He may have decided the whole attempt futile. In 1959 I tried to teach Germans baseball when I was a student in Austria, but gave up: the lack of adequate words for specific things. More likely, Monçaide may have lumped Christian and Hindu together in much the way the Arab traders along the African coast had done. If so, he then kept the Hindus misinformed as well.

Even if they had met Nestorian Christians in Calicut, the Portuguese might not have recognized them. The Nestorians had adapted to their environment and functioned as a caste. They followed Hindu regulations on food and pollution, so to the casual observer they would have been indistinguishable from the Malayalam speakers of Kerala, who practised Hinduism and were the majority of the population.³²

So far I have explained how the confusion between Christian and Hindu came about. The next stage of my discussion is more difficult and depends more on inference. Why did such a confusion both exist and persist throughout the Portuguese visit to East Africa and India? Style of worship may have been the main reason behind the confusion. The Muslims here are crucial, since they initiated the identification of Hindu with Christian in East Africa. They were the ones who told the Portuguese that Christians were in Mombasa and Malindi. Now the Arabic and Swahili speakers met Hindu traders on a regular or at least annual basis, as they came and went, following the rhythm of the monsoon, and Hindus lived in Mombasa and still do. East African Muslims also had some experience with Coptic Christians, more in the north at Mogadishu than further south, though the Portuguese did talk of Coptic prisoners in Mombasa and Mozambique. None of the Arab merchants, however, had probably ever seen a Coptic church or service. In 1498 these merchants suddenly met Latin Christians, coming to them in ships the

way the Hindus did. Being Muslim and, therefore, iconoclast, they probably lumped Latin Christian and Hindu together as iconodules and would have regarded the Copts in much the same way.³³ Both Hindu and Christian used statues and painted images in their places of worship, and the Portuguese carried such images with them on their ships.³⁴ The Nestorian Christians of India provide a useful counter example because they allowed only a bare cross in their churches and had no other images. While they might blend easily with Hindus in their daily lives, Hindus would not have confused a Nestorian church with one of their temples. On the other hand, Muslims would not experience there the revulsion that a Latin Christian or Hindu temple might produce. In fact, the Nestorian shrine of Saint Thomas at Mailapūr (now part of Madras Chemnai), attracted Muslims as well as Christians.³⁵ A lamp burned perpetually before the tomb of the apostle, but in the early sixteenth century Duarte Barbosa found a Muslim fakir in charge of it.³⁶ There is no record of Hindus worshipping in the church. The issue then is not theology per se so much as modes of worship.

In this respect the Portuguese attitude to Hindu statues provides crucial evidence. When Da Gama and his embassy visited their first Hindu temple, the author of the *Roteiro* noted that the saints painted on the walls had long teeth and four-to-five arms (*Roteiro* 59; *Journal* 55). The fact that the images did not always preserve the human form troubled him, not the images as images. The poet Camões, who made an epic out of Da Gama's voyage, composing it fifty to sixty years later,³⁷ elaborated on this scene and provided a rationale for his reaction. In the epic the Portuguese see instead of paintings statues in wood or stone, some with repugnant shapes (Camões 7. 46-47). The statues seem wondrous to the Portuguese, a fact which Greenblatt would say blocks recognition and distances Hindu worship as alien. Camões, of course, was better informed than the author of the *Roteiro* yet the rationale he gives for the rejection turns on the same thing which troubled the earlier visitor. Hindus do not always preserve the human form in their statues, while the Portuguese in contrast are used to seeing God *only* in human shape. The poet thus tacitly evokes both Genesis 1:27, the priestly claim that human beings were made in the image of God, and the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. God became man to save humankind. Statues like Ganesha with a human body and the head of an elephant would make no sense to a Christian.

As iconodules then the Portuguese did not object to images as images but to the *kinds* of images they saw in Hindu temples. Hence King Manuel's

opinion that the Hindus were defective Christians.³⁸ One wonders whether the Hindus in turn considered the Portuguese defective Hindus.

This confusion had political implications. Muslim presence in the Deccan made tacit allies of the iconodules. Muslims in the subcontinent often did not show the partial tolerance they had for Christians and Jews on the Mediterranean coasts. In the Qur'an Muhammad did not include as inspired religions east of that zone, and the initial Muslim invaders of India, Mahmud of Ghazna and the Ghurids, had been harsh and intolerant. Their successors, of course, could not have remained in power so long if they had remained truly intolerant and been systematic in their opposition to Hinduism. What did continue, however, was the aversion to images and the religious practices that required their use. In this sense the newly arrived Portuguese would arouse the same set of reactions as did the Hindus. For the Muslims there was little difference.

The Portuguese came east with similar attitudes towards Muslims. They had a long tradition of fighting them both in Portugal during the Reconquista and more recently in Morocco. The author of the *Roteiro* twice calls them dogs,³⁹ and in his epic Camões celebrates Portugal's western battles with Moors. The Portuguese bombarded Mozambique, the first Muslim town they visited in the East, and Muslim traders in turn did all they could, both in Africa and India, to ruin the Portuguese.

There were about 15,000 Muslims in Calicut,⁴⁰ and they bribed Hindus there, arguing that the Portuguese were pirates and would end Hindu rule (Camões 8. 52-53).⁴¹ Camões here preserves the evidence. The Samorim's council, the members of which had all accepted money from the Arab merchants in town, opposed a league with Portugal (8. 60, 63-64). The Muslims wished to keep the Portuguese there until the arrival of the Mecca fleet, when they could overwhelm the newcomers (9. 7), the reason why Da Gama suddenly left in August. In effect the Portuguese fought Arab traders in the Indian Ocean. They posed no real threat to the land powers in India and tried to keep out of local fights.⁴²

The Portuguese originally wanted to make an alliance with Calicut, primarily a commercial agreement, but one with a military component (Camões 7. 60-63; 8. 59, 73). While they failed with the rulers and merchants, they did find the people friendly. Sailors in town were well treated, and many Tamils visited their ships, to sell fish but also to see the foreigners. Great crowds came, and many brought their children, so that the Portuguese found

themselves a tourist attraction (*Roteiro* 71; *Journal* 69). Later, when they established their commercial empire, they allowed racial mixing.⁴³ Camões, for example, composed *endechas* (dirges or love songs) for a “barbara escrava,” probably a Hindu woman.⁴⁴ Politically, this openness to the culture of South India meant tacit alliance with Vijayanagar, the capital of the Hindu south, and a shared hostility to Muslims. Albuquerque, who did most to set up the Portuguese system in the East, cooperated with Vijayanagar.⁴⁵

Contrasting forms of worship then help to account for the confusion between Christian and Hindu. The iconoclast Muslims brought together the two religions which venerated images. The confusion grew out of a triangular relationship and might never have occurred without the iconoclasts. Yet for the confusion to exist so long, for all those months Da Gama’s fleet stayed in India, one suspects there had to be more behind it. Here I can only speculate but have three brief suggestions.

The first is structural. Hindu and Latin Christian shared a common structural bifurcation, that between a priestly class and the laity (if I may use Western terms). Among the Latins, clerics still made up most of the learned class and used a learned language, Latin, to say the Mass and the canonical hours. Some of them had extensive education and studied theology. The Brahmins were their equivalent in India, especially those who learned Sanskrit, memorized the *Vedas*, and presided over temple services. Popular piety, on the other hand, differed noticeably from that of the learned in both places. In the West the laity favored Mary, the saints, relics, and loved the devotions introduced by the preaching friars: the rosary, the crib, the stations of the cross. In India this variance appeared and appears in the different deities honored by the two groups. The learned knew and know Vedic gods like Indra, king of the gods,⁴⁶ and Surya (the sun god), mostly ignored or forgotten in popular religion. The people loved and love rather deities and avatars like Krishna, Ganesha, or Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune. The most dramatic manifestation of this split was spatial. The sanctuary or shrine, while open to view, could not be entered by the laity, whether in India or in Europe.

Secondly, both religious groups revelled in mystery. The West had its trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and so did the Hinduism of the period with Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Both religions had gods who became human or had human avatars: the Logos became Jesus and Vishnu had as avatars Rama⁴⁷ and Krishna.

Thirdly, behind this identification there may be a common, if confusing, origin. Here a slight digression is necessary. Twenty years after Da Gama returned to Lisbon, Luther began the Protestant Reformation. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many Protestants would claim that the medieval or Latin-rite Catholicism had forgotten its origins in Judaism and instead assimilated the practices of the old Indo-European and Mediterranean paganism.⁴⁸ Henry More called Catholics paganochristian and constantly returned to the charge in his commentary on the Apocalypse.⁴⁹ Yet Westerners knew of Greco-Roman religion mostly through books as well as some archaeological sites and statues. Camões compares Hindu gods to those he read about in classical texts (Camões 7. 47-48): Roman gods and monsters of the old poetry like the Chimaera, Janus with his two or four faces, Briareus of the many arms, and Egyptian gods like Jupiter Ammon with his horned head and dog-faced Anubis.⁵⁰ Camões indicates that Greco-Roman religion had its own supply of monstrous shapes, not just the Egyptian, something the Protestant critique ignored in its equation of Catholic and pagan. Medieval Christianity had demons, of course, who appeared in a variety of monstrous shapes, decorating column capitals or participants in the great scenes of the Last Judgment over the western entrances of churches. None, however, were venerated. Janus was. Yet the Protestant critique, while hostile, helps us understand better the Portuguese confusion in India.

When the Portuguese participated in Hindu religious services, they saw preserved through a collateral tradition a paganism (to use their term) which went back to the same Indo-European ancestry that lay behind Greco-Roman worship, which they knew through books. Such a background might account for their eerie mixture of recognition and shock, for books can never finally give the experience that the living religion in its actual practices affords. Only in India and some places further east could an Indo-European have such an experience, one particularly powerful when it occurred without the prejudices that later clouded European views of Hinduism, an experience possible really only at this first encounter.

I began with a confusion, however, and really must end there, for that first encounter really was much more complicated. On the one hand, there were the Indo-Europeans from the West, who professed a religion of Semitic and iconoclastic origins, which had long since incorporated Indo-European iconic practices. On the other were Tamils, who were not Indo-European but who practised an iconic religion of Indo-European origins. The confusion was deep and had to be mutual.

Notes

¹ Greenblatt 132. Greenblatt cites from the ed. of Genaro García, trans. Alfred Maudslay, 5 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1908).

² Greenblatt 134.

³ *A Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama* 54. n. 2 & Appendix A, 111-16.

⁴ *Arquivo Português Oriental* 1.1.1: 85-86.

⁵ See Polo 2: 356-59, ns. 3 & 4; Roux 26-27, 147-50.

⁶ See Burton 1: 259-60 and Crone 16, 21-23. Varthema, who traveled east between 1503 & 1508, met two Milanese in Calicut, who were casting guns for its ruler (Burton 2: 445). Boxer doubts that Da Gama knew of Covilhã's report, assuming he would not then have so mistaken Hindus for Christians. See Boxer 33-34.

⁷ Until recently it was generally accepted that Alvaro Velho wrote the *Roteiro* or *Journal*. See Neves Aguas's discussion in his ed. of the *Roteiro*, intro., 10-13.

⁸ Burton 2: 420 & n. 3 & *Journal* 36. n. 1.

⁹ Burton cites Barros, *Decades* 1.1: 298 for this point (Burton 2: 420). He assumes the captives were Ethiopians.

¹⁰ Barros says they were Banyans, that is, Hindu traders from Gujarat (*Journal* 40. n. 4); Goes and Castanheda, that they were merchants from Cranganore in Malabar, which was a Nestorian center. Burton suggests Socotra instead, the island south of Arabia which was still mostly Christian in 1507 but himself agrees with Barros. The Portuguese mistook Hindu traders for Christians (Burton 2: 420-22).

¹¹ This fact argues against an identification of the visitors as Nestorians, since they had in their churches before World War I only a bare cross and no other images or human forms. See Riley, "Nestorians" 409a.

¹² *Journal* 45. n. 2; Burton 2: 420.

¹³ Ravenstein explains that this pillar held the flag that indicated the start of a festival. It was made of wood, covered with copper or silver. The cock at the top symbolized the war god, Subraumainar (*Journal* 52. n. 3).

¹⁴ It held the coco-lamps used during a festival (*Journal* 52. n. 3).

¹⁵ Brahmins strike these balls, when they enter. Other castes may not touch them (*Journal* 54. n. 1).

¹⁶ Goes, 40 calls it a "round" chapel (*Journal* 53. n. 1).

¹⁷ Scholars have variously identified the goddess. Burton suggests Gauri, the "White Goddess." Charton III, 296, prefers Maha Maja and her son Shakyas. J. Jacob Jaus suggests Mari or Mariamma, the dreaded goddess of smallpox at Calicut. *Amma* in Malayalam means *mother*. Jaus was a member of the Basel Mission at Calicut (*Journal* 53. n. 2).

¹⁸ Castanheda 1. 57 has João de Sá kneel by Vasco da Gama and say: "If these be devils, I worship the true God." Vasco smiled (*Journal* 54. n. 2). Castanheda was writing, of course, many years later, though he drew carefully on reliable sources and used the *Roteiro*.

¹⁹ The earth is a mixture of dust, cow-dung, sacrificial ashes, sandalwood, etc., cemented in rice-water (*Journal* 54. n. 4).

²⁰ Burton explains that *Samorim* means *Tamburi*, the highest caste of the *Nayrs* or ruling caste in Calicut, so it was a titular name, the dynastic being Mana Vikram (Burton 1: 274).

²¹ The Netrani or Pigeon Islands (*Journal* 80n1). They are roughly halfway between Cannanore and Goa.

²² At Anjediva, an island near Goa, they found a large stone church, which Muslims had destroyed, except for a chapel roofed with straw. Locals prayed to three black stones in the middle of the chapel, presumably lingams (*Roteiro* 84; *Journal* 83 & n. 2).

²³ *Roteiro* 75-76 & *Journal* n. 2 on 76. Cabral returned the prisoners on the next voyage.

²⁴ Freitas 38; Cipolla 15-16.

²⁵ See also Burton 2: 427-28.

²⁶ Burton 1: 267.

²⁷ This was probably standard naval practice but most likely shocked the pilot.

²⁸ Goes 38; Barros 1. 4. 6; and Faria y Sousa (*Journal* 45-46, & n. 3 on 45).

²⁹ The name means the happy one (*el mas'ūd*). Correa and Castanheda call him Taibo or Bomtaibo, the good. *Bom* and Arabic *tayyib* mean the same thing. See Burton 2: 432.

³⁰ *Journal* App. E, 180; Burton 2: 432.

³¹ *Journal* 50. n. 2, citing Castanheda 1. 15.

³² Riley 408b.

³³ They would have known more about Ethiopian Copts, particularly at Mogadishu, and probably could distinguish them from Hindus. The Portuguese passed by Mogadishu on their way home. They did not stop there.

³⁴ The Samorim wanted Da Gama to give him a gilded statue of Mary. Da Gama refused, saying that she guided him to India and would guide him home (*Roteiro* 65; *Journal* 62).

³⁵ Polo 3. 18. 353. Muslims called St. Thomas *Avarian* or Holy Man.

³⁶ Polo 358. n. 4.

³⁷ Burton puts the composition of the *Lusiadas* between 1543 and 1572, its publication date (6).

³⁸ This was not the last time Latin Christians made such a judgment. Little more than a century later the well-trained Jesuits who established a mission in Tibet expressed the same opinion about the Buddhists there. The Jesuits believed that there had once been large Christian communities in Tibet and accordingly found traces of Christianity in lamaist Buddhism with its images and temples, monks and monasteries. See Lach and Van Kley 3. 4. 1773, 1778-83.

³⁹ At Mombasa. See *Roteiro* 47-48; *Journal* 38-39.

⁴⁰ Toussaint 101.

⁴¹ Ironically, by its rejection of the Portuguese Calicut lost its supremacy in trade but remained a Hindu state.

⁴² Bitterli 61-63. At their height the Portuguese had only 12-14,000 men scattered from East Africa to China, less than the Muslim community in Calicut alone.

⁴³ Bitterli 66-68.

⁴⁴ Burton 1: 48.

⁴⁵ Burton 3: 292.

⁴⁶ See Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's headnote to her selection of Vedic hymns on Indra, *Rig Veda*, 139-40. Indra suffered a total loss of worship in the Hindu period.

⁴⁷ In his discussion of the *Ramayana* Smith remarks: "Rama, who is pictured as an incarnation of the deity [Vishnu], has thus become the man-god and saviour of mankind in the eyes of millions of devout worshippers." (*Oxford History of India*, 55-56)

⁴⁸ It was not just the Latin West. The Greek Orthodox were involved as well. Ephesus provides an example. Once famous for its temple of Artemis, it became a center for Marian piety.

Mary was supposed to have gone with John to Ephesus, and the site still has her “house.” See the discussion of Meryemana in McDonagh 285.

⁴⁹ For some examples see More ix-x, 20-21, 124-35, 237-38.

⁵⁰ Actually Anubis has the head of a jackal.

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Poems

Borges and Camões

Translated by
William Baer

Jorge Luis Borges

The Borges

I know little or nothing of the Borges,
my ancestors, those Portuguese people lurking here
within my flesh, whose obscure but permanent trace
remains: their habits, their rigor, and their fear.
Shadowy, as if they'd never seen the sun,
these strangers to the processes of art
still form, indecipherably, a part
of time, of earth, and of oblivion.
And justly so, because their labors have prevailed:
they're Portugal — that famous race, at whose command,
the Great Walls of the East were breached, who sailed
out across the seas, to other seas of sand.
They are that fearless king who vanished inside
the desert, and those, back home, who swear he never died.

Jorge Luis Borges

To Luís de Camões

Without a shred of pity, time dulls the most
heroic swords. Now, sad Captain, your command
is done, and you've come home to the nostalgic coast
to die with, and within, your native land.
On distant, enchanted, foreign deserts, the flower
of Portugal was lost, unable to endure;
while Spain, no longer subdued and flush with power,
threatens your borders and unprotected shore.
So I wonder if you ever understood,
before you crossed that final shore to final rest,
that *everything* which seemed lost and gone for good —
your sword, your flag, the Orient, and the West —
would resurrect, free from the human curse
of change, in *Os Lusíadas*, your epic verse.

Luís de Camões

Mondego

Sweet, clear waters of the Mondego, sweet, kind,
and restful river of my memories,
where once misleading hopes whirled in the breeze,
misguiding me, and leaving me blind.
And now, I've gone away, sweet distant stream,
but, still, your memory overtakes me yet,
and never lets me change, or ever forget:
that the further away I am, the closer I seem.
Yes, the Fates have caused my soul to disappear
into remote and distant lands, to roam
within these seas and winds, both strange and new,
and yet, my soul, thinking of you, even here,
flies upon the wings of my sweet dreams of home,
into your lovely waters and bathes in you.

Luís de Camões*Cruel Senhora*

Cruel Senhora, I've always been wary. I knew
I needed to watch you closely in case
your doubts would surge to disaffection and erase
our love. Then I'd be ruined, since I love only you.
And now, everything I'd hope to have is lost:
you're pursuing another lover. So I detach
myself, believing your retribution will match
the sacrificial depths my love has cost:
I've given my soul, my senses, and my life to you;
I've given you everything I have within me,
and you promised love, but now, there's only disdain.
Lost and hopeless, I don't know what to do,
yet I know the day will come when this memory
will crush you down with terrifying pain.

Luís de Camões

Hippolytus

My over-confident heart, grew more and more
blinded to the evil it was capable of:
such a daring and illicit love,
such an agony never felt before.
But her eyes were like the ones that, every day,
I conjured in my foolish fantasy,
and Reason, terrified, abandoned me
to all my tempting thoughts and ran away.
O chaste Hippolytus, you took no part
in Phaedra's incestuous schemes. You never consented
to a love that blasphemed what should and shouldn't be.
So Love revenged, on me, your virtuous heart,
and now, at last, she's finally repented
for all the brutal damage she's heaped on me.

Luís de Camões*Doom*

My sins, my wild loves, and Fate herself
have all conspired against me. My countless tough-
breaks and dumb mistakes have been hard enough,
especially, since all I ever wanted was love itself.
Somehow, I've survived, yet I still possess
the terrible pains of everything that's passed —
as all those whirling Furies convinced me, at last,
to never, ever hope for happiness.
Over the years of my life, I still can recall
those endless mistakes and blunders that incited Fate
to punish my foolish hopes so relentlessly.
Unfortunately, deceitful love, offered no help at all.
Oh! What could ever possibly satiate
this evil spirit for vengeance that's torturing me!

Luís de Camões

Luís de Ataíde

More than crushing countless kings, those lords
of the Orient; more than preserving the state
of India; more than eclipsing the fate
and fame of others who'd fought the heather hordes;
more — far more — than all those grand
and marvellous military campaigns, is the way
in which you now, completely unarmed, slay
the monsters and chimeras of our native land.
Over the years, accomplishing so much,
and crushing your enemies, your name is now
unparalleled in fame and majesty,
and yet, what inspires your greatest praise is how
you've vanquished, my Lord, in Portugal, such
ingratitude — such awesome jealousy!

Luís de Camões

Time

Time changes, and our desires change. What we believe — even what we *are* — is ever-changing. The world *is* change, which forever takes on new qualities. Always, we see that the “new” and “novel” are overturning the past, unexpectedly, while we retain from evil, nothing but its terrible pain, from good (if there’s been any), only the yearning. Time covers the ground with her cloak of green where, once, there was freezing snow — and rearranges my sweetest songs to sad laments. Yet even more astonishing is yet another unseen change within all these endless changes: that for me, *nothing* ever changes anymore.

Luís de Camões

Dona Maria

on her death in 1578

"Death, what have you stolen?" — "This lovely day."
 "When did you do it?" — "At the rising sun."
 "Do you have any idea whom you've taken?" — "None."
 "Who willed it?" — "God, in His inscrutable way."
 "Where's the corpse?" — "In the earth, in the cold."
 "What's become of her brightness?" — "Dark and black."
 "What says Portugal?" — "She wants her back:
 convinced that Maria deserved to live and grow old."
 "Did you kill those with her?" — "They're already dead."
 "So what says Love?" — "She can't say a thing."
 "Well, why's she so silent?" — "I've made her acquiesce."
 "So what's remains at the royal court?" — "Just dread."
 "What else?" — "Nothing. Not a single thing,
 except lamenting her vanished loveliness."

Luís de Camões

Essence

Give back your whiteness to the Easter flowers,
and your blushes to the crimson rose;
Give back to the sun the luminous light that glows
from your ravishing eyes and overpowers
our hearts. Give back your songs to the Sirens, who
filled your voice with irresistible harmony;
Give back your charms to the Graces, who now agree
they're much less elegant than you.
Give back to beautiful Venus your loveliness,
to Minerva your wisdom, talents, and refined
arts, and give back your purity to the chaste and true
Diana. Divest yourself of all you now possess,
all these gifts, and all that's left behind
is cruelty . . . the very essence of you.

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Reviews/Recensões

Camões and the English

George Monteiro

1.

On the subject of “Camões in England” there has been much work done prior to *Camões em Inglaterra*, a collection of studies undertaken in a master’s course at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa under the capable direction of Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa, who coordinates the book.¹ Outstanding among those earlier studies are Félix Walter’s *La Littérature Portugaise en Angleterre à l’époque romantique* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1927); Carlos Estorninho’s “O Culto de Camões em Inglaterra,” *Arquivo de Bibliografia Portuguesa*, nos. 23-24 (Coimbra: Isle, 1961); and Madonna Letzring’s “The Influence of Camões in English Literature,” *Revista Camoniana*, I-III (1964, 1965, and 1971), pp. 158-180, 27-54, 57-134. To those core studies can now be added *Camões em Inglaterra*.

In the European reception of Camões’s work, Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa reminds us, the English must be granted primacy. (1) Theirs was the first translation of *Os Lusíadas* outside the Iberian peninsula. (2) Theirs is the only case in which a translator is considered to have turned his version of Camões’s epic into a work that as a poem in its own right contributes to English language and culture. (3) England was the first foreign country to recognize that Camões’s lyric poetry was the equal of his epic poetry. (4) An Englishman was the first one to strike a medallion of the poet’s likeness. (5) The first free-standing bio-bibliographic work on Camões was done by the English.

There is a wealth of information in this collection of studies that take new and fresh looks at tried and tested topics such as the translations of *Os Lusíadas*, beginning with Richard Fanshawe’s in 1655 and proceeding through, among others, William Julius Mickle’s in 1776, J. J. Aubertin’s in 1878, and Richard Francis Burton’s in 1880, with a final nod at the American Leonard Bacon’s in 1950 and William C. Atkinson’s (in prose) in 1952. Complementing those studies of the translations of Camões’s epic are detailed studies of the nature and quality of the so-called *lírica*. There are noble attempts at seeing from within what translators of various stripe attempted to do as they “Englished” Camões, at once faithful to their visions of what the translation of poetry entailed and permitted and yet differing so

radically from one another. Utilizing current notions and theories on translation, the students of the various versions of Camões's work examine closely the versions of the epic by Fanshawe, Mickle, and Burton, and of the lyrical poetry by Strangford. Shortcomings and downright errors are not slighted in the commentary, but they are not gloried in either. Rather the emphasis is on explaining thoughtfully the many expansions, substitutions, and seemingly idiosyncratic choices of word and image.

Besides the individual essays devoted to Mickle's version of *Os Lusíadas*, Strangford's translations of the shorter poetry, John Adamson's much undervalued contributions to the study of Camões, and Richard Francis Burton as a passionate *camonista*, there is an essay on English encomia on Camões (especially in poetry), along with useful essay-lists of the English translations of *Os Lusíadas* and of the lyrics through the nineteenth century. A quick count confirms that "Alma minha gentil" was the shorter poem most often selected by English translators, a choice that, as my own study shows, continues through the twentieth century.

The one great fact about Camões in England, as this collection confirms in several places, is that Camões's reputation in England was founded on two misconceptions. First, the English accepted unquestioningly (despite the existence of Fanshawe's quite different view in his translation) Mickle's conception of *Os Lusíadas* as the epic of commerce. Setting aside Camões's own conception of his poem as a celebration of the history of the Portuguese people, this eighteenth-century employee of the East India Company beefed up the heroic role of Vasco da Gama until he became the center of the poem, thereby turning the poem, by addition and expansion (preceded by a long apologetic and explanatory essay), into a glorification of imperial expansion through commerce. It was Mickle's version of Camões's poem, incidentally, that was praised by the American whose own epic of commerce and democracy he entitled *The Whale* (in England) and *Moby-Dick, or The Whale* (in America), evoking at one fell swoop both leviathans, the scriptural one and the English Hobbesian one.

Herman Melville was also influenced by the second largely misconstrued Camões, the poet whose life was read out of his lyrical poetry, first by Lord Strangford and then by John Adamson. This Camões was served piping hot to the English romantics. Ill-fated in love and unappreciated by his country, this Camões was the author of lyrics that spoke emotionally to William Lisle Bowles, Lord Byron, Robert and (above all) Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Camões em Inglaterra offers us fundamental scholarship of a kind that has become increasingly rare in recent decades. These studies are the unpretentious fruit of the earnest search for solid facts and meaningful details. It is refreshing to see, moreover, that these young scholars, rather than dismissing disdainfully or (worse) ignoring the work that has preceded theirs (done no matter how long ago), have chosen to incorporate the fruits of the labors of their elders and to build on them.

2.

In an essay on the books that might have been in Robinson Crusoe's library, Alberto Manguel identifies "several Portuguese books" that Robinson Crusoe recovers from the ship-wreck. "No doubt a copy of Camões's *Lusiads*, a fitting book in a ship's library," he ventures; "perhaps the writings of the illustrious António Vieira, including the wonderful 'Sermon of Saint Anthony to the Fishes,' in which Crusoe might have read a defense of the brothers of Friday; most certainly the *Peregrination* of Fernão Mendes Pinto, which tells of strange voyages through the still-mysterious Orient and which Crusoe's author, the omnivorous Defoe, knew well."²

In *As Fontes Portuguesas de Robinson Crusoe*, Fernanda Durão Ferreira has a longer list of the Portuguese works in Robinson Crusoe's island library.³ Although António Vieira does not figure in her research, she concludes that Crusoe's Portuguese books are *Os Lusíadas*, *A Peregrinação*, Duarte Pacheco Pereira's *O Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, João de Barros' *Décadas da Ásia*, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda's *Descoberta e História da Conquista da Índia*, Gaspar Correia's *Lendas da Índia*, Gomes Eanes de Zurara's *Crónica da Conquista da Guiné*, and Valentim Fernandes' *O Manuscrito*.

The task that Fernanda Durão Ferreira has set for herself is to establish connections between Defoe's early eighteenth-century novel and its Portuguese precursors by searching out parallels in incident and character, echoes of words, and duplication of phrases. Her thesis is: "Para delinear Robinson (o personagem principal) Daniel Defoe inspirou-se na figura de um homem que viveu solitariamente muitos anos na ilha de Santa Helena e cuja história é descrita por João de Barros, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda e Gaspar Correia. Para além disto, no desenrolar da obra irão surgindo episódios semelhantes a outros que muito bem conhecemos de 'Os Lusíadas', de 'A Peregrinação', de *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, Gomes Eanes de Zurara e Valentim Fernandes." If some of the evidence is not by itself persuasive, in the aggregate her evidence

points to Defoe's direct and (to us) brazen appropriation of the received texts of Portugal's great maritime literature.

Of particular interest to student of Camões are the parallels the author finds between incidents in Robinson Crusoe and two episodes of *Os Lusíadas*. The episode of the "Velho do Restelo" is posited as the source for Crusoe's conversations with both his father and his friend's father before embarking on his sea voyage. Turning to Crusoe's return to England and his decision to go by land this time, the author discovers echoes and coincidentals in the episode in Canto VI of "O Magriço."

After marshalling the evidence to establish Defoe's debts in Robinson Crusoe to at least eight different Portuguese texts, the author reconfigures Robinson Crusoe as something other than an "English" hero. He becomes a hero of Portuguese maritime literature.

Um herói cujo verdadeiro nome é Fernão Lopes;
 Que é filho do Velho do Restelo;
 Que viaja da Guiné para o Brasil num barco português;
 Que vive em S. Salvador da Bahia e fala a língua local;
 Que durante uma viagem para a Costa Africana, naufraga na
 Ilha de S.ta Helena;
 Que depois de chegar a Inglaterra volta a fazer-se ao mar
 com destino a Lisboa, onde procura o capitão português
 do barco onde viajara para o Brasil;
 Que parte de Lisboa para Inglaterra por terra, como o
 Magriço;
 Que, como o Magriço, atravessa todas as terras que aquele
 herói percorreu, indo socorrer as damas indefesas,
 Dificilmente se pode considerar um herói inglês.

As Fernanda Durão Ferreira rightly points out, in Defoe's time he had access to *The Lusiad, or, Portugals Historicall Poem*, Sir Richard Fanshawe's English translation of *Os Lusíadas* published in 1655. But a comparison of the passages from Defoe Fernanda Durão Ferreira proposes as having been influenced by Camões with Fanshawe's text indicates that Fanshawe was not Defoe's source, at least not for specific language. One might thus infer that either Defoe had access to *Os Lusíadas* in translation into some language other than English or he knew Portuguese well enough to read Camões in the original.

In any case, the name of Daniel Defoe can now be included among those numerous English writers influenced by the classics of Portuguese literature.

Notes

¹ *Camões em Inglaterra*. Coordinated by Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa. Lisbon: Ministério da Educação/ Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1992.

² Alberto Manguel, "The Library of Robinson Crusoe," *American Scholar* (Winter 2001), pp. 61-62.

³ Fernanda Durão Ferreira, *As fontes portuguesas de Robinson Crusoe*. Lisbon: Fim de Século, 1996.

**Peter Russell. *Prince Henry 'the Navigator': A Life.*
New Haven: Yale UP, 2000.**

Liam M. Brockey

Perhaps the most recognizable name in the catalog of cultural heroes associated with the Age of Discovery is Prince Henry of Portugal (1394-1460). It was he, as many remember from school books and public monuments, who launched the first ships into the Atlantic seeking new worlds and thereby marked the beginning of the modern era. Both the positivistic and nationalistic historians of an earlier age celebrated his evident "rationality," a trait clearly displayed by his commitment to cartography, astronomy, and oceanic navigation, and placed him at the head of those involved in the long march of progress. Yet despite this heroic image, modern historical scholarship has disabused us of the notion that Henry was so radically different from his contemporaries, and that, as a figure from the dawn of modernity, he contained an awkward combination of medieval values and modern ambitions. Both a precocious empire builder and an antiquated crusader, an economically astute colonizer and a knight obsessed with chivalric glory, the *Infante D. Henrique* resists attempts at easy definition.

Peter Russell's recent biography of the Prince seeks to recast Henry's life in light of an accurate reading of the available sources telling of his deeds. Relying primarily on the standard chronicles and narratives as well as on sources culled from over fifty years of study in archives throughout Europe, Russell succeeds in presenting an informative new look at the *Infante*. The story he tells of Henry's life, from his birth in Porto to his feats of arms in North Africa to his final years in the Algarve, reveals a complex character who bore the marks of a host of familial, religious, and cultural influences yet matched them all with a relentless drive for renown. The reader catches glimpses of Henry in a variety of guises—the bold, often reckless, military leader; the unsatisfied third son of D. João I forced to seek glory abroad; the shrewd sponsor of lucrative sea voyages—all of which appear appropriate for his times, yet uniquely combined in the man who forced the beginning of the European expansion.

Since the basic elements of Henry's life and the outlines of the Henrican discoveries are well known, Russell's biography is most valuable for casting

light on the political context of his actions and reducing some of his enigmatic singularity. For instance, the debates in Portugal surrounding the attack on Ceuta in 1415, the traditional starting point of the Portuguese discoveries, are discussed thoroughly. Here Russell reveals that the course of expansion into Africa was by no means clear in the early fifteenth century, and that many at court questioned both its cost and overall wisdom. Henry's ambition brooked no resistance, he shows, enabling him to convince successive kings to send invading armies into risky battles in Morocco using the worn rhetoric of crusade. Russell also demonstrates how, despite the Prince's wealth and influence, royal councilors continually saw him as a menace to good diplomatic relations with the other Iberian powers and an impediment to increased royal revenues. Nevertheless, Russell reveals, it was precisely the economic and political innovations that the *Infante* used to administer his overseas territories that would provide the organizational template for the Portuguese overseas empire. Determined to find an outlet for his chivalric desires, Henry sponsored the explorations of the African coast, seeking allies for a final crusade against Islam, but, in their absence, gladly traded in goods ranging from gold to wheat to slaves. His innovations, Russell contends, were not necessarily in the novel nature of his ambitions, but in their geographic direction, out into the Atlantic rather than onto the battlefields of Europe.

Despite the considerable length of this survey, however, Russell does not completely dispel Prince Henry's shroud of mystery. Although he provides an attentive, if long-winded and oftentimes repetitive, reading of the available sources, he advances interpretations of the various aspects of the *Infante's* character that are unconvincing and often contradictory. For instance, after insisting that his crusading zeal overrode all "merchant considerations" to the conquest of Ceuta, Russell insists that Henry drew on considerable business savoir-faire for the successful development of the Atlantic islands. Later on, Russell claims, one Henry would foolishly attempt the conquest of Tangier because of his "fanaticism" while another, more calculating, Henry would recruit Venetians to sail under his banner to the uncharted waters of sub-Saharan Africa in search of trade. With a more consistent respect for fifteenth-century mores and without such trite characterizations that posit a troubling conflict between religion and rationality, apparent vestiges of older interpretations of "the Navigator's" life, the complex figure of the Prince would cease to be so disturbing. Russell also strays far from his commitment to contextuality in his muddled explanation of Henry's involvement in the

Atlantic slave trade. While accurately noting the lack of racist perspectives in the early modern period and suggesting that Henry followed the footsteps of slavers who acted with the approval of Church authorities, his discourse remains full of moralizing overtones in his ironic descriptions of the Prince's "Christian" character. Nevertheless, Russell's new account of Prince Henry's life presents a wealth of easily accessible information to help expand the one-dimensional figure familiar to all.

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**Harold Bloom. *How to Read and Why*.
New York: Scribner, 2000.**

Cristina Alberto

É de certo modo nietzscheana a forma como Emerson surge, depois de Francis Bacon, Samuel Johnson e William Hazlitt, como modelo inspirador da abordagem que Harold Bloom faz ao tema da leitura em *How to Read and Why*. O modo de ler que visa tornar explícito o que um texto tem de implícito adquire uma dimensão anti-historicista e pragmática, que reserva à leitura o papel terapêutico de constituir uma alternativa à superficialidade, à fragilidade e à escassez dos nossos laços sociais. *How to read and Why* tem também por função colmatar os lapsos de um tempo que demite, por exemplo, Robert Browning pelo seu grau de dificuldade e usa critérios de leitura susceptíveis de valorizar determinado tipo de obras ou escritores em função de variantes que não se prendam necessariamente com o seu mérito intrínseco. Dos cinco princípios de base de recuperação da leitura enunciados no prólogo, o princípio segundo o qual “a leitura deve ser criativa” tem origem no conceito emersoniano de leitura criativa [“creative reading”¹], a que Bloom viria a atribuir a designação de “misreading” e a partir do qual definiu, em meados dos anos setenta, as grandes linhagens de influência da poesia norte-americana e dos seus antecedentes britânicos.²

O precursor por excelência das linhagens esboçadas neste catálogo de instantâneos é Shakespeare, “o inventor do humano.” As duas grandes linhagens de escritores de contos definidas por Bloom: a linha inspirada em Chekhov e Hemingway, por um lado, e a linha kafkiana-borgesiana, por outro, representam, por exemplo, dois modos de ler Shakespeare — Borges lê a sua impessoalidade e enorme capacidade de ser tudo e nada, enquanto Chekhov concebe Shakespeare essencialmente como o criador de Hamlet.

Cervantes, a outra figura central da literatura do ocidente, tem em comum com Shakespeare criar personagens que mudam por auto-reflexividade, ainda que de modo diferente: as personagens de Shakespeare alteram-se psiquicamente por se ouvirem a si-próprias numa perspectiva de alteridade, enquanto as personagens de Cervantes evoluem por intercâmbio entre si. Esta diferença teria dado origem a duas grandes linhas temperamentais da cultura ocidental e a duas grandes famílias de romancistas. Cervantes teria sido pre-

cursor de Thomas Mann e Dickens (ainda que Dickens crie personagens estáticas), e Shakespeare teria dado origem a uma linhagem que inclui Stendhal, Jane Austen, Dostoevsky, Henry James e Proust.

Dos grandes poetas de língua inglesa contemporânea, D. H. Lawrence, parente próximo de Blake e Whitman, representa o culminar do desespero visionário. Este é um desespero com características particulares, que, por transcender o mundano, adquire propriedades terapêuticas. Há, por exemplo, nos grandes poemas W. B. Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Hart Crane e Lawrence que abordam o tema da morte uma “qualidade para além do desespero,” comparável ao gesto de tocar a trombeta na hora da morte do protagonista de Browning, Childe Roland:

Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew, “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.”

Bloom associa esta cena final do poema de Browning à imagem da trombeta da profecia [“The trumpet of a prophecy!”] de Shelley, em “Ode to the West Wind” e nota que o título do poema “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came,” consiste na citação integral de um verso de *King Lear*. Todavia, omite dizer que esta imagem final de Browning é calcada do poema medieval francês “La Chanson de Roland,” em que o protagonista, Roland, esmagado pelas forças inimigas na sequência de uma traição, toca a trombeta de marfim antes de morrer, para chamar o rei francês, Carlos Magno, de volta ao campo de batalha. Ainda que Browning tenha aparentemente lido a referência de Shakespeare a “Childe Roland” como uma alusão ao poema épico francês, é pouco clara a relação entre Roland e Lear. Em contrapartida, Roland tem muito em comum com Hamlet: aconselhado por Olivier a tocar a trombeta para chamar Carlos Magno antes do início da batalha, quando ainda era possível, com a ajuda do rei, vencer os “infiéis” de Saragoça, Roland recusa, alegando a integridade do seu nome.³ Roland paga com a vida e com a vida de mais vinte mil cavaleiros a integridade póstuma de um nome. Há no acto de construir a sua imagem, até ao pormenor da posição em que o rei irá encontrar o seu corpo no campo de batalha entre os outros mortos, uma profunda semelhança com a postura de Hamlet, que, como é notado por Bloom na sua análise desta cena final, no momento em que morre rodeado de cadáveres, acaba pedindo a Horatio que tome diligências para assegurar a integridade póstuma do seu nome. A peça termina mesmo com uma aproximação entre

o palco da morte de Hamlet e um campo de batalha:

Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
 For he was likely, had he been put on,
 To have proved most royal; and for his passage,
 The soldier's music and the rite of war
 Speak loudly for him
 Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this
 Becomes the field, but here, shows much amiss.

Hamlet, o grande precursor da literatura ocidental, é no fundo um soldado e, à semelhança de Roland, só vacila no seu magnífico solipsismo quando perante a incerteza da imagem que deixa para a posteridade.

Notes

¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983) 59.

² Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975).

³ "Ce serait une folie de ma part! / En France la douce j'en perdrais mon renom," *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. et trad. Ian Short (Paris: Poche, 1990) 93.

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Peter Brooks. *Troubling Confessions. Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Inês Morais

Troubling Confessions analisa a confissão, “one of the most complex and obscure forms of human speech and behavior” (10), partindo das “inconsistências” e “ambivalências” que Brooks considera inerentes ao acto de confessar. Os usos do discurso confessional na literatura, na tradição religiosa e no modelo psicoterapêutico sugerem a Brooks que algumas reservas devem ser tidas em relação, sobretudo, ao uso da confissão para fins legais. A confissão é apresentada como uma prática inquietante e problemática, não apenas pela verdade estranha de que parece ser veículo, mas pelas motivações ambíguas que a acompanham, e que a aproximam da ficção. Esta proximidade é claramente considerada um perigo, para o qual se exigem cuidados especiais: “where confession is concerned, the law needs to recognize that its conceptions of human motivation and volition are particularly flawed, even perhaps something of a fiction” (5).

A instituição da confissão pela Igreja de Roma, no IV Concílio de Latrão convocado pelo Papa Inocente III em 1215, é apresentada como o momento-chave na criação, não apenas da prática religiosa da confissão, mas também do sentido “moderno” do indivíduo (93), sugerindo-se uma ligação particular (não isenta de ambiguidade) entre a verbalização da culpa, implicada desde então na moralidade do Ocidente, e a progressiva consciência individual. Literariamente, o acto de confessar é configurado numa forma como a autobiografia, tida como típica da modernidade, de que as *Confissões* de Rousseau seriam o primeiro grande exemplo. A imagem de Rousseau com o volume das *Confissões* na mão diante de Deus no Dia do Juízo, evocada pelo próprio autor na abertura da obra, aparece, no livro de Brooks, como figura da transparência sugerida pelo discurso da confissão, ao mesmo tempo que evoca os contornos complexos e obscuros também implicados nessa ficção da verdade.

É, no entanto, sensível que a preocupação fundamental de Brooks neste ensaio é de natureza jurídica: a exigência, por parte do Supremo Tribunal dos E.U.A., de que as confissões sejam “produto de uma vontade livre e racional” para que possam ser aceites como prova é tão pouco clara para Brooks como

a noção de confissão voluntária, que volta a associar a uma espécie de ficção: "its conceptions of human motivation and volition are particularly flawed, and indeed something of a fiction" (64). O mesmo, aliás, se diz do modelo psicanalítico—que constitui para o autor a forma mais elaborada da confissão moderna secularizada—em que o único teste de verdade à história do analisado é, segundo Freud ("Constructions in Analysis," 1937), a produção de mais história.

Subjacentes à tentativa expressa de compreender o que significa confessar estão, pois, questões relativas ao poder do estado sobre os indivíduos em nome dos quais esse poder se exerce: é, de facto, dada aos suspeitos de crimes a possibilidade de não dizerem a sua culpa? Aparentemente, desde os célebres "*Miranda* warnings" que os acusados têm o "direito de permanecer em silêncio," de não testemunharem contra si próprios, o que justifica a utilização legal das confissões que se verifique terem sido feitas livremente. O problema, no entanto, está na dificuldade (ou na impossibilidade) de se fazer tal verificação: vários casos mostram que uma estranha compulsão para confessar terá frequentemente dado origem a confissões falsas (de crimes que os suspeitos não tinham cometido e até de crimes que não tinham sequer ocorrido) e a própria relação estabelecida entre interrogador e interrogado é, muitas vezes, suficiente para produzir uma confissão de culpa, sem o recurso a qualquer (outro) tipo de coacção. Neste contexto, apenas o exercício do direito ao silêncio poderia ser considerado um efectivo acto de vontade. Sugere-se, assim, que resistir a essa forma invisível de poder a que Brooks chama "tirania da transparência" seria a única atitude inequivocamente voluntária. Por isso, também, a "voluntariedade" exigida para que uma confissão seja aceite como prova é, segundo os termos de Frankfurter que Brooks recupera, um *anfibio*—no sentido em que se movimenta, ambigualmente, entre a realidade e a ficção.

Até ao fim do seu livro, Brooks insistirá em que a procura de maior clareza em relação ao que se pretende que as confissões sejam e façam trará benefícios à visão e ao tratamento dos acusados pelo Estado. As suspeitas assumidas em relação à utilização da confissão para fins legais não parecem, pois, ter eliminado a sua própria inclinação por essa forma obscura de transparência. De alguma maneira, persiste a hesitação que Peter Brooks vai repetindo ao longo do ensaio: "we want confessions, yet we are suspicious of them."

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**Edward W. Said. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*.
Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2001.**

Rui Estrada

As Consequências do Exílio.

A última obra de Edward W. Said, uma colecção de ensaios escritos desde 1967 até à data de publicação do livro (Junho de 2000), intitula-se *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. O facto de Said ter escolhido para título desta colecção o título de um dos seus ensaios, originalmente publicado em 1984, releva uma das características mais marcantes que atravessa praticamente todos os textos deste volume: a condição de exilado na formação do pensamento intelectual de Said. As consequências daqui decorrentes remetem, em meu entender, para duas linhas de análise que, embora paradoxais, são ambas indexáveis à condição de exílio de Said.

“The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional” (185) é a frase que pode servir de emblema ao primeiro tipo de análise. Sendo um palestiniano exilado, vindo para os Estados Unidos em 1951, Said rejeita, nas mais diversas áreas de investigação de que falam os seus textos, qualquer reificação do pensamento ou da História. A crítica à reificação, à identidade e à ortodoxia é, nas palavras de Said, a tarefa predominante de um intelectual no exílio. Este está em melhores condições de cumprir esta tarefa na medida em que, tendo sofrido ele próprio uma agressão fundamentalista, está mais desperto para a recorrência de casos similares.

Neste sentido, Said critica, por exemplo, os intelectuais que se dirigem uns aos outros num vocabulário hermético (122 e seguintes), os discursos das minorias que acabam por substituir um centro de autoridade por outro (379 e seguintes), os povos colonizados que adoptam o mesmo tipo de discurso e práticas identitárias dos anteriores colonizadores (421 e seguintes). No último ensaio do livro, “The Clash of Definitions,” podemos observar com mais detalhe esta incessante luta de Said contra um conceito de cultura e de História que se fundamenta em valores supostamente naturais e monolíticos. Contrariando a perspectiva (que considera eurocêntrica) de Samuel Huntington, diz Said: “Rather than the idea of clash, for instance, deriving from a real clash in the world, we would come to see it as deriving instead from the strategies of Huntington’s prose, which in turn relies on what I would

call a managerial poetics, a strategy for assuming the existence of stable and metaphorically defined entities called civilizations which the writer proceeds quite emotively to manipulate (...)” (582-83). Said sugere aqui que as fronteiras entre “nós” e os “outros” não são reais mas linguísticas, ou seja, decorrem de um discurso comprometido que, por qualquer ordem de interesses, procura organizar o mundo de uma determinada maneira, assumindo posteriormente que essa é a maneira natural. Ora, é esta naturalidade histórica que Said procura sempre pôr em causa, procurando evitar assim a eclosão de qualquer fundamentalismo.

Em suma, neste primeiro tipo de análise vemos um Said que, tendo sido exilado da sua própria “home,” tem, contudo, a percepção que a constituição de qualquer outra “home” é o passo inicial para outros eventuais exílios.

“(...) [W]orks of literature are not merely texts” (384) é a frase que está subjacente não só ao discurso de Said contra a desconstrução e os movimentos de interpretação formalistas, mas também a frase que assinala o regresso da História. De facto, neste segundo tipo de análise æ que convive pacificamente com o primeiro, às vezes nos mesmos textos æ Said sugere que não devemos desligar, quer no que diz respeito à literatura ou a outros textos, as condições de produção da obra produzida. Manter este elo intencional é o único modo, segundo Said, de percebermos o contexto histórico, social e geográfico que está na origem dos vários discursos. Uma vez mais o exilado detém aqui uma posição privilegiada visto que, em virtude do processo que sofreu, é o que melhor sabe falar daquilo que na verdade é ou foi a sua “home”: “This is not at all to say, however, that only an exile can feel the pain of recollection (...) but is to say that Conrad, Nabokov, Joyce, Ishiguro, in their use of language provoke their readers into an awareness of how language is about experience and not just about itself. For if you feel you cannot take for granted the luxury of long residence, habitual environment, native idiom, and you must somehow compensate for these things, what you write necessarily bears a unique freight of anxiety, elaborateness, perhaps even overstatement (...)” (xv).

A questão que Said parece levantar é que se torna necessário regressar à História tal como ela é ou foi para explicar a maneira como nos vemos e integramos no mundo. A constituição desta “home” Histórica, determinada e intencional, é agora entendida como uma condição indispensável para sermos compreendidos e não como um potencial perigo. Por outras palavras, contrariamente ao primeiro tipo de crítica para o qual, fruto do exílio, qualquer “home” era instável, neste segundo caso, igualmente em virtude do exílio, a

“home” Histórica do exilado é aquilo que lhe dá a sua identidade. Com isto não pretendo enfatizar qualquer contradição profunda no pensamento de Said, mas somente sugerir que estas duas formas de análise decorrem da sua condição de exilado. Voltando novamente ao texto, mais concretamente ao ensaio “The Future of Criticism,” posso dizer que, para Said, a dificuldade reside na impossibilidade de fazer (utilizo agora os conceitos desse ensaio) sempre uma crítica “ensaística”; por vezes o que faz inevitavelmente é uma crítica “sistemática” ou “doutrinária.”

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Carlito Azevedo. *Sublunar*. Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2001.

Silviano Santiago

A minguada, consistente e poderosa produção poética de Carlito Azevedo encontra-se encordoada na antologia intitulada *Sublunar*. Ela não só reúne o melhor dos quatro livros de poemas que o autor publicou nos últimos dez anos, como também materializa o poeta como a mais fascinante figura da geração literária que despontou na década de 1990.

Os quatro livros não são reapresentados na ordem de publicação. Liberados das respectivas capas e da seqüência ditada pelos índices originais, os poemas hoje estão soltos e foram reagrupados acronologicamente por seis temas, à imitação do recurso de que se valeu Carlos Drummond ao organizar célebre e esgotada antologia para a Editora do Autor. A modéstia auxilia o poeta a não classificar o livro de “obra completa.” Escolheu apenas os poemas que, ainda hoje, “melhor o iludem.”

O novo título æ sublunar æ incorpora de maneira notável o tom do último livro de poemas de Carlito, *Versos de circunstância*. Explicita, ao mesmo tempo e retrospectivamente, a questão do lugar e do instante dramatizada pelos quatro livros æ o do cotidiano. A epígrafe, tomada a Adília Lopes, deixa clara a obsessão. Quando se fala de “sublunar,” está se falando de “ovos estrelados, coisa caricata, suja.”

Nada existe de mais opaco à razão contemporânea do que o cotidiano dos ovos estrelados. Essa lição nos foi ensinada pelos dramaturgos do teatro do absurdo (Samuel Beckett, por exemplo) e seus seguidores (Harold Pinter, outro exemplo). Aliás, é também ela o fundamento da nova poética teatral descrita no extraordinário opúsculo *Três usos da faca*, de David Mamet. Escreve ele: “Dramatizamos um incidente tomando os eventos e reordenando-os, alongando-os e comprimindo-os, a fim de poder compreender o seu significado pessoal para nós, como protagonistas do drama individual que compreendemos ser a nossa própria vida.” Em conversa displicente com amigos e familiares, ao comentar o tempo, ou o atraso do ônibus, cada um de nós é dramaturgo, ou poeta em potencial.

A vida enquanto conceito e abstração é hoje objeto da nova gramática e sintaxe æ o genoma æ a que chegam os cientistas nos laboratórios de pesquisa. Para quê a literatura? A história com suas coordenadas de calendário religioso

e leigo, associada à confusa geografia com suas sangrentas cartografias e reterritorializações pós-coloniais, bandeia para o lado dos filósofos, cientistas sociais, jornalistas e políticos.

Só sobra para o artista o opaco e enigmático dia a dia da sua vida. Ao recorrer de palavras os eventos insignificantemente significativos do cotidiano, o poeta se entrega, como nos diz Carlito em nota introdutória, ao “inútil do fazer,” ou seja, à reconstrução da sua e de qualquer vida pelo paradoxo do cotidiano.

Abandonam-se de vez as lições freudiana e proustiana do tempo perdido, hegemônicas durante o século dos memorialistas e das infâncias traumatizadas. Adentra-se por uma lógica temporal e espacial, que foi configurada literariamente por William Faulkner. O tempo do “enquanto.” Enquanto transávamos, eu, nós fizemos, agimos, sentimos isso e aquilo. O “enquanto” quadricula, autobiograficamente, a sucessão monótona dos dias, isolando e colorindo situações corriqueiras e particulares, consideradas, no entanto, fora-de-série pelo entorno que lhes é emprestado.

O quadriculado do “enquanto” castra a flecha da história e as armas da geografia, que derrotam o minúsculo evento na sua excentricidade altaneira. A geometria do “enquanto” estabelece molduras (no sentido das artes plásticas) a fim de que o evento específico ou a emoção ímpar sobressaia na sua encantadora espessura e encantada superficialidade. Naquele local guarnecido e espectral, sensações diárias e liliputianas se agigantam e passageiramente brilham em todo o seu esplendor singular. Leia-se o poema “Abertura,” na seção intitulada “O lado de fora”: “Desta janela/ domou-se o infinito a esquadria.”

A “vocação pictórica” da poesia de Carlito, assinalada pelos críticos e elucida por Lu Menezes na orelha da antologia, deve ser compreendida dentro desse parâmetro anti-freudiano e anti-proustiano, avesso das filosofias da profundidade. Nos poemas onde aquela vocação é mais aguçada, esclarece Lu, “entra em turbulência não o mundo como pintura (como tela ilusionista), mas a pintura como mundo e, portanto, o mundo como vertiginosa superfície cromática.”

Como nunca antes, a poesia brasileira reencontrou na década de 90 os píncaros da sua ancestral veia lírica galaico-portuguesa. Distanciou-se ainda mais do público contemporâneo na sua necessária e indispensável inutilidade. Como diz Hazlitt, citado por Mamet: “é fácil fazer com que a turba concorde com você; é só você concordar com a turba.” Quando a poesia diz que quer ajudar, ensinar, explicar e corrigir, não estaria oprimindo e escravizando?

A apreensão do valor do vocábulo “pedra” em *Sublunar* é crucial para o

bom entendimento do compromisso da poesia de Carlito com a tradição modernista. Não cabendo aqui subscrever o complexo percurso do vocábulo na antologia, assinala-se que aparece disperso ou imantado no extraordinário pastiche de Drummond que é o poema “Fractal.” Este, por sua vez, remete obviamente para os mais emblemáticos dos poemas drummondianos, “Carrego comigo,” “O enigma” e “A máquina do mundo.” O vocábulo remete também para a “educação pela pedra,” de João Cabral de Melo Neto: “No Sertão a pedra não sabe lecionar,/ e se lecionasse, não ensinaria nada.” (Remeteria, ainda, para a “imaginação da pedra,” assinalada por Antônio Cândido, ao ler os poemas do setecentista Cláudio Manuel da Costa.)

O vocábulo remete, de maneira discreta, para o apelidado “quinto elemento,” que aparece sem avisar no livro *Os quatro elementos* (1935), de Murilo Mendes. O quinto elemento na poesia de Murilo (recordemos) é a pedra fundamental æ da religião cristã (o trocadilho de Mateus sobre o apóstolo Pedro e a pedra), do amor do poeta a Maria (tanto a Maria da Conceição, quanto a Maria da Saudade Cortesão) e, finalmente, da poesia. Leia-se o poema “Enseada do Botafogo” de Murilo: “Há uma mulher na pedra/ Que desafia a eternidade/ Deus pensa a eternidade na pedra/ A Eternidade é mulher.” O poema poderia ter sido escrito por Carlito, caso viesse no modo verbal do “se”: “Se alguma pedra pudesse tornar-se lírio/ seria esta.”

Configurada a múltipla ascendência modernista, resta configurar a poética do cotidiano de Carlito Azevedo. Na falta de referências precisas na crítica, julgamos importante adiantar três processos de composição do poema, três figuras de retórica, os três encorpados pelo verbo “ser.” Primeiro: uma coisa é o que é. Segundo: uma coisa é o que não é. Terceiro: uma coisa é e será outra.

No primeiro caso (é o que é), trata-se de processo de composição por justaposição de elementos idênticos, e em alguns casos de elementos semelhantes. O predicado nada acrescenta ao sujeito da frase. Ele reitera. O verbo é artífice de uma cópula especular, narcísica. Trata-se de evidente herança de Gertrude Stein (“uma rosa é uma rosa é uma rosa”). O ritmo semântico do verso é o da tautologia. O verso não avança significado. Na imobilidade gestual, a significação é entregue ao leitor sob a aparência de mistério gozoso. O texto requer, ao acenar para o zen-budismo, a lucubração ou o silêncio contemplativo. Recordemos. A lucubração ou o silêncio contemplativo diante da tela “Branco sobre branco,” de Malevitch.

Tomemos o primeiro poema da antologia, “e a este/ que brinca na areia

da praia chamamos nosso filho, pois/ é o que é, como a bola azul em suas mãos é a bola azul". Filho e azul sobre azul. O filho é o que é. A bola azul é o que é. No entanto, filho e bola são aproximados pelos braços da conjunção "como." É ela que nos faz entrar pelo segundo processo de composição.

No segundo caso (é o que não é), trata-se de um processo de composição por comparação. Os elementos em correlação aparentemente não são idênticos; no entanto, pelo duplo elástico da conjunção "como" são aproximados e estreitados numa simbiose que compromete a integridade de significado tanto de um quanto do outro elemento, sem negar-lhes autonomia. O poema oferece ao leitor perguntas. O que o filho e a bola azul têm em comum? Se um é o que é e o outro é também o que é, como entidades tão distintas podem ser aproximadas e julgadas semelhantes? O enriquecimento semântico do poema é dívida para com a surpresa e o inesperado da criação e da leitura.

No segundo poema da antologia, lemos que um pensamento triste se desprega dos cabelos desgrenhados do filho, "como um/ sorriso, como um relâmpago." Ter despertado um sorriso, ser despertado por um relâmpago, eis situações (respectivamente, ativa e reativa) tão inesperadas quanto o pensamento triste no rosto infantil. Para tomar uma palavra cara a Carlito, estamos diante de situações de "limiar." Nem dentro da primeira entidade nem fora da segunda entidade. Entre o sorriso e a tristeza, entre o sorriso e o relâmpago. Caso o poema penda para a segunda entidade, entramos no movimento que é responsável pelo terceiro processo de composição.

No terceiro caso (é e será outro), trata-se de um processo de composição por metamorfose (veja-se, em especial, a terceira seção da antologia). Mais do que de bravatas no trampolim do "como," trata-se de decididos processos de transformação. De longe é o processo de que mais se vale Carlito. Nega-se a coisa no presente do ser a fim de que se apreenda o *movimento* (isso é e será aquilo) na natureza-morta, tanto física quanto humana. O vácuo é impensável na lógica quadriculada do cotidiano. A vocação pictórica do poema torna-se cinematográfica. Há intervenção do processo de montagem na fatura do poema. Segundo o jargão dos teóricos do cinema: "Fade in"/ "fade out" na maioria dos casos; às vezes o simples "corte" para se passar de uma à outra cena.

Os lagos nas montanhas do México irão secar, diz o poema. De dentro deles despertará a salamandra, "que nenhum sol/ há de secar." Onde há, houve; onde houve, nascerá o outro. O processo de metamorfose pode ser de tamanho efeito que extrapola a composição do poema para se intrometer na organização do livro. Leiam-se as duas e sucessivas versões do poema "Na noite

gris.” Ao trair a anterior, a nova versão se transforma em outra. “Tigres à espreita?”, escurece a página do primeiro poema, “Tigres ausentes?”, ilumina-se a página do segundo poema. Outro exemplo. Os pés da amada, ao premerem o asfalto duro da rua sem vida, criam uma inexistente relva, onde a passante cidadina se metamorfoseia em bela colhedora de mimosas, tomada a Boticelli.

Sublunar se mantém em cima de três tripés, que indiciam o experimento (e não mais o experimentalismo dito de vanguarda) da retomada da dicção galaico-portuguesa pela perspectiva de três dos nossos grandes líricos modernistas (Drummond, Murilo e Cabral). *Sublunar* se mantém em cima de três outros tripés, agora retóricos, que indiciam o experimento (idem) de uma poesia que, sem abdicar dos altos vôos da tradição, imiscui-se no cotidiano para revelar a alta voltagem semântica do poema que, naquele tempo e lugar, se escreve pelas linhas marotas da simplicidade. Leiamos Carlito: “A trama era tão simples, sob um céu/ tão simples, sem visões e sem um véu/ sobre os olhos...”

Ao se equilibrar pela simplicidade sobre esse duplo tripé, *Sublunar* aponta misteriosamente para um quarto lírico modernista, Manuel Bandeira. Antes de se mostrar pela presença vocabular, a poesia dele ali está pelo tom na voz lírica, pelo matiz de aquarela na representação. Em silêncio fonético, o poema de Carlito comunga com o de Bandeira. Em *Sublunar* estão o zelo, o ardor e o recôndito segredo do objeto lírico que, destituído de ornato, impera como luxuosa fantasia na passarela da imaginação do leitor. Como a poesia de Bandeira, a de Carlito é também finissecular. Vale dizer, respira “maldoror,” “mal d’aurore,” melancolia. Diante dos mais vociferantes instrumentos cirúrgicos, o pulmãozinho do rouxinol suspira na mesa de operação e nos dá até logo.

Com *Sublunar*, Carlito Azevedo afirma-se como o aguardado poeta pós-cabralino. A nossa mais legítima voz pós-moderna. Que no futuro o poeta não decepcione a antologia.

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The Center also sponsors and organizes colloquia, concerts, art exhibitions, dance performances and theatrical productions, in addition to visits by distinguished authors and critics. With the Center's support José Saramago, the 1998 Nobel Laureate for Literature, was awarded

an honorary degree in 1999 and returned to UMD in 2002 to be the keynote speaker in a similar ceremony for Harold Bloom, America's premier man of letters. In the same month of April 2002, the Center co-organized and co-sponsored events with José Saramago at the prestigious New York Public Library Bartos Forum (Prof. Bloom presented Saramago) and the John F. Kennedy Library, the latter in partnership with the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities. In fall 2002 the Center hosted Dr. José Ramos-Horta, Foreign Minister of East Timor and the 1996 Nobel Laureate for Peace. In April 2001, the Center organized a colloquium and launching of an issue of *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies*, subtitled "Brazil 2001," at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

Future projects include the publication of studies on the Portuguese-American communities and the further development of the Portuguese-American Archives, located in the University Library Special Collections. In addition, the Department of Portuguese is currently developing a Graduate Program in Portuguese Studies to be launched in fall 2004. Finally, the Center and Department are working together to develop a scholarship program to promote the study of Portuguese at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The varied activities of the Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture have been made possible by the commitment and generosity of numerous supporters. A gift from Frank B. Sousa, Chairman of the UMD Foundation Board of Directors, enabled the launching of the summer program, and subsequent major grants from the Luso-American Foundation of Lisbon and the Government of Portugal contributed significantly to the development of the Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture and the Department of Portuguese. Other grants from the Camões Institute and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation have supported the Summer Program in Portuguese and the organization of major international conferences. Portuguese studies at UMass Dartmouth have also benefited from the generous financial support of Anthony Andrade, Dennis Rezendes, the Citizens Financial Group, and the Portuguese-American legislative delegation led by State Representative Robert Correia. The Hélio and Amélia Pedroso/Luso-American Foundation Endowed Chair in Portuguese Studies was made possible by the generous support of Luis Pedroso, the Luso-American Foundation, Anthony Andrade, Maria Dulce Furman, Frank B. Sousa and Manuel Fernando Neto.

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